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CONVERTED

THE MONKS OF THE WEST

VOLUME THE FIRST

THE

MONKS OF THE WEST

FROM ST. BENEDICT TO ST. BERNARD

BY THE

COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE

REV. F. A. GASQUET, D.D., O.S.B.

AUTHOR OF

"HENRY VIII. AND THE ENGLISH MONASTERIES"

FIDE ET VERITATE

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME THE FIRST

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Dedication

To Pope Pius IX.

Most Holy Father,

I lay at the feet of your Holiness a book which, for many reasons, owes its homage to you. Intended to vindicate the glory of one of the greatest institutions of Christianity, this work specially solicits the benediction of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the supreme head and natural protector of the Monastic Order. Long and often interrupted, sometimes for the service of the Church and of yourself, these studies were taken up again at the voice of your Holiness, when, amid the enthusiasm not to be forgotten which hailed your accession, you declared, in a celebrated encyclical letter, the duties and rights of the Religious Orders, and recognised in them "those chosen phalanxes of the army of Christ which have always been the bulwark and ornament of the Christian republic, as well as of civil society." [1]

Your Holiness is well aware, moreover, that this homage is in no way intended to withdraw from criticism or discussion a work subject to all human imperfections and uncertainties, and which assumes only to enter upon questions open to the free estimate of all Christians.

[1] "Lectissimas illas auxiliares Christi militum turmas, quæ maximo tum Christianæ, tum civili reipublicæ usui, ornamento atque præsidio semper fuerunt."—*Encyclical Letter* of June 17, 1847.

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It is solely in consideration of the melancholy and singular circumstances in which we are placed, that you will deign, most Holy Father, to hear, and perhaps to grant, the desire of one of your most devoted sons, ambitious of imprinting upon the labour of twenty years the seal of his affectionate veneration for your person and your authority. What Catholic could, in our days, give himself up to the peaceful study of the past without being troubled by the thought of the dangers and trials by which the Holy See is at present assailed, without desiring to offer up a filial tribute to him in whom we revere not only the minister of infallible truth, but also the image of justice and good faith, of courage and honour, shamefully overpowered by violence and deceit?

Accept then, most Holy Father, this humble offering of a heart inspired by a sincere admiration for your virtues, an ardent and respectful sympathy for your sorrows, and an unshaken fidelity to your imprescriptible rights.

I am, with the deepest respect,

Your Holiness's

Most humble and most obedient

Servant and Son,

CH. DE MONTALEMBERT.

April 21, 1860.

A SKETCH OF
MONASTIC CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

THE Count de Montalembert's work needs no recommendation. It might perhaps have been thought that the subject was too remote from the main interests of the present day to make any new edition possible. The fact, however, that one is called for is the best evidence of the continued popularity of *The Monks of the West*.

In this introduction I propose to spend no words on the work itself, or on its author, to whom as a monk I cannot but feel the utmost gratitude, since he, a man of the world, has so thoroughly understood, and, as an artist, so graphically pictured, the services rendered by the Monastic Order to mankind. My purpose is to occupy the space allotted to me in dealing with a matter which did not engage Montalembert's attention, and which, perhaps, has not hitherto been sufficiently considered. The subject, which I may call from analogy *Monastic Constitutional History*, will be found to present many features of interest.

Writing, as Montalembert did, with the design of presenting to the world a popular account of the workings of the monastic system in Europe, as exemplified in the lives of those monks whose names are chiefly known to us in the history of nations, it did not enter into the scope of his work to give any definite account of this side of monastic history. It is obvious that during a past which covers

fourteen hundred years, the principles of monastic organisation will have varied to meet various and varying conditions of time and place. It would seem desirable that those who may wish to understand the full bearing of Western monachism should have at hand some consecutive account of the purely constitutional side of monastic government. In this belief, the chief part of the present introduction is devoted to a sketch of the changes of policy and government inaugurated at various stages in the history of the Order. But to make this intelligible it is first necessary to take into account the general principles which underlie the whole theory of monasticism.

It is undeniable that the monastic order is a great fact in the history of European civilisation. Augustine in England, Boniface in Germany, Ansgar in Scandinavia, Swithbert and Willibrord in the Netherlands, Rupert and Emmeran in the territories of Austria, Adalbert in Bohemia, Gall and Columban in Switzerland and Eastern France—all are names of monks who must be regarded as the first to lead the nations from the darkness of paganism and savagery to the light of the Christian faith and the blessings of a civilised life. It is not too much to say that few nations of the modern world have been converted to Christianity, or tutored in the arts of peace, except through the medium of monasticism.

In view of this broad fact, it is impossible to doubt that the monastic system must possess some strange power, some special gift of influencing bodies of men. A glance at the monuments which these great men have left behind them will reveal the secret of their power, and the principle in the working of which they assured their success. Canterbury, Fulda, Salzburg, St. Gall, and the thousand abbeys

which existed, or still exist, in Europe, all testify to the monastic life which the apostles of the Western nations carried with them into the countries they evangelised. The monastery was the pulpit of the monk-apostle, and his power for good lay not in his words chiefly, but in the example of his monastic life.

This is the secret of the conversion of European peoples. St. Augustine, for example, came with forty companions, all trained in the same "school of the Divine service." They landed in England, winning the country to Christ with cross and banner, and with the songs of the liturgy on their lips; they pray, they live the life of the Church in contemplation and in labour. Their names are for the most part unknown, except some few who are later selected to found similar centres in other parts of the country. History hardly tells us that they preached and taught; they lived and worked and died, and behold the peoples among whom they dwelt were Christian. It is the same elsewhere. Even in his martyrdom and death St. Boniface associated with himself thirty of his monastic brethren.

It is an old truth—as old, at least, as the days of Solomon—that the heart does not long for what the eye does not see. Words are indeed powerful when they touch the springs of memory, or rouse the feelings in regard to some well-known and well-loved object, but they are powerless to fire the imagination as can the actual presence of the object itself. And if this is so in regard to matters with which we are naturally sympathetic, it is much more true in respect to what is repugnant to our natural tendencies, or what requires an effort to be understood or to be put into practice.

There is nothing more noble, but at the same time nothing

harder to nature or less likely to fire mere natural enthusiasm, than the Christian life. Faith in the unseen, submission of the intellect and of the will, war to be ever waged against the passions—"the cross, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness"—these are the framework of the Christian rule of conduct. There is little here likely to find a response in the untuned nature of man. True it is that the godlike spark still slumbers in the soul, however fallen and depraved, but it is buried too deep for bare words to reach, and is too dull for the breath of argument or exhortation to kindle it into life. The burning fire of enthusiasm and heroic self-devotion can alone reanimate it and make it burst into a living flame. Eloquence, even when supported by learning, education, energy, and influence, is not the means by which the conversion of nations is brought about. They may concur, they may bring the work to a conclusion, they may rouse the attention and excite the curiosity, but it is the life of the preacher, or rather the fact of his aiming at a higher ideal than that to which he invites his hearers, that touches the heart, subdues the will, and finally leads the intellect to accept the faith of Christ. It was not the learning of the Apostles, but the fact that they had left all to follow their Master, that drew after them the largest hearts and intellects of the empire of Rome.

The Monk is therefore pre-eminently the Apostle. But his apostolate is not exercised to its full extent as an individual. A single man, though he be a saint, is but one. He comes and he goes; and although he draw all after him like the whirlwind, or flash into the darkness as lightning, passing from east to west, he lives his little space and is gone. Even a Francis Xavier could not convert

a nation or build up a Church in India or Japan. The Christian life is not merely the life of an individual, it is the life of a society, and as such it cannot be illustrated in its relation and practical workings by the example of any one person. To establish a Christian nation it is necessary to present for the imitation of the people who are to compose it, not the bare laws and regulations of the Church, but an actual pattern of a Christian society. This is found pre-eminently in the monastic life; and it is the monastic order, therefore, as distinguished even from the religious order, which has proved itself the apostle of the nations.

To fully understand the position of monasticism in the early ages of the Church it is necessary to draw a distinction between the Religious Orders, as now understood, and the Monastic Order. Both, indeed, set before themselves as an aim the realisation of the Gospel counsels; both, too, have much in common as to principles, traditions, and usages. But while the former are societies, instituted at various periods in later ages to meet accidental needs of the Church, taking up the religious life as a means towards carrying out that special end, the latter is merely a systematised form of a life according to the Gospel counsels, existing, for its own sake, as a full expression of the Church's true and perfect life. From Antony and Pachomius it passed into the hands of the great lawgiver of Western monachism, St. Benedict, and assumed under him that final shape which adapts itself so marvellously to the requirements of each succeeding age, and knows no better reform than that of a return to the simple principles of his broad-minded monastic regulations.

This life, so simple yet so wide in its conception; this code, so discreet yet so firm; this "school of Divine service,"

so homely and yet so sublime in its teachings, is founded upon three chief elements—the vows, the cloister, and the Divine Office. By the first, the monk dedicates himself to aim at a life of perfection; by the second, he separates himself from actual contact with the world and all that might interfere with his renunciation of it, to unite himself to the family of his monastic home; and, by the third, in continual and united intercourse with his Creator in the choir service, he realises that kingdom of God upon earth which is the visible form of the Christian revelation.

St. Benedict instituted three vows. The first, and what may be regarded as the note of St. Benedict's legislation for the monastic order, is *stability*. This is the key to the spirit of monasticism as interpreted in his rule, for by it the monastery is erected into a family, to which the monk binds himself for ever; acting only through it, sharing in all the joys and sorrows of its members, giving and receiving that help, comfort, and strength which come from mutual counsel, and the free interchange of thoughts and desires, and watched over by a superior, who is the father of his family.

The second is the vow of *conversion*, by which the monk solemnly renounces the three concupiscences, and binds himself to aim at the perfection of the evangelical counsels and a life of perfect charity. In so far as he is able to fulfil this by God's grace, he becomes the man of God, the perfect Christian.

Thirdly, the monk binds himself by a vow of *obedience* to an entire subjection of his will to the command of his superior, and to the observance of all those means of holiness supplied by the rule and its practices of labour and mortification.

The monastic ideal demands seclusion, and this not

merely as a means of avoiding the temptations of the world. All great undertakings are matured in solitude. It is not in the hurry and confusion and excitement which accompany execution, but in the stillness and calm silence of preparation, that the strength which does great deeds is accumulated and concentred. The fury of destruction and the ravages of extermination may be the work of a moment, but the task of healing and of building up is a slow process, and a labour of time and silence. The monk undertakes a great work in the calm and peace of solitude, that of following out the counsels of perfection. The "workshop," where he makes use of "the instruments" by which this is to be achieved, is, says St. Benedict, "the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the community," and the solitude is not that of the hermit but the seclusion of the cenobite, or monk living in common with others, which is the "fortissimum genus monachorum." Under such circumstances, obedience, paternal care, discipline, fraternal charity, and the calm privacy of family life, are so many guarantees for the monk's perseverance.

The central figure of this society was its Divine King. The monastery was a palace, a court, and the Divine Office was the daily service and formal homage rendered to the Divine Majesty. This, the *opus Dei*, was the crown of the whole structure of the monastic edifice. It was pre-eminently the work of the monk, which was to take precedence of every other employment, and to which monastic tradition has ever given a marked solemnity. Day by day, and almost hour by hour, the monk, purified by his vows, enclosed from the world, seeks to renew the wonderful familiarity with his God and Father, which our first parents forfeited, but which, through our second Adam, is restored in the Christian Church.

In a word, the Divine Office is the soul of the monastic life.

Such, in brief, is the fundamental, the vivifying idea of the monastic life. From this point of view it is nothing more than the Christian life of the Gospel counsels conceived in its full simplicity and perfection. It has no determinate object in view beyond this; it has no special systems or methods. The broad law of Christian liberty is its only guide; it is neither strict nor lax; it aims neither at too high things nor is it content with any low standard of conduct; but it adapts itself to the workings of grace in each individual soul, and gains its end when it has brought that individual soul to the highest perfection of which its natural and supernatural gifts render it capable.

Here then lies the distinction between the *Monastic* and what we have called specifically the *Religious* Orders, namely, that the latter have essentially some special work or aim, in view of which many of the observances of the monastic life, and some of its chief characteristics have to give way altogether, or be forced to take a subordinate place. To this special work all must accommodate themselves, and of necessity it will demand special views, special systems of training, special spiritual and scientific methods, and in so far must interfere with the development of Christian social sanctity, which is the scope of monasticism.

It is this that specially fitted the Monastic Order for the work of national conversion which it effected in Europe. A religious of any kind has without doubt a special power in effecting conversions. Not only his state, and the special gifts of character which are the natural results of the training received to fit him for the religious life, but the mere

fact of his being a religious, has a power of impressing the mind of those to whom he addresses himself. There is, moreover, a power in united numbers altogether greater than that represented by the sum of the individual units. A corporation has its own weight of authority, and a religious who is attached to such a body acts with the authority and influence which naturally belongs to it.

The monks possess many characteristic qualities calculated to exercise a special influence over the minds and hearts of men. First, the monk is secluded from the world, and must be able to lead a life of silence. What a power does not this give him over the man of the world, who is perhaps the very slave of the little pleasures, the frivolous vanities, the busy interests, the all-engrossing ambitions which the monk leaves and ignores. The power to withdraw is a mark of strength, and we worship strength in spite of ourselves. The man who can show himself perfectly independent of us at once places himself in a position of superiority, and the feeling of inferiority is the first step towards submission.

Again, there is a simplicity about the true monastic character. One thoroughly imbued with that spirit has no end to serve save only the one. His looks, his ways, his speech, bear the impress of that large liberty of spirit which flows from a childlike obedience to the inspirations of the inner life. His tone marks the candour, open-heartedness, and consideration for others which are the result of habits formed by his family life. If he lacks calculating shrewdness, an art which the world affects but despises, by this his way is opened to the only sure road to the human heart. He who has won the heart of a nation may make its laws.

Further, the monk possesses the great secret of absence. He does not intrude nor mar his work by over-presuming on his influence. In spiritual matters, more especially, little good and much harm is done by interfering between man and his conscience, and by forestalling the workings of Divine grace. The monk, too, dwells in a world that has lasted long. By his traditions he has learnt the Divine art of patience, and can wait in peace and faith for God's own time.

In the monastic order the action of the individual is sunk in that of the corporate body of the community to which he belongs. It is thus not any single man's peculiar gifts or talents, but the united reputation of a body of unknown men which is the power brought by the monastic order to such a work as that of a people's conversion. Not the men who compose the monastic corporation, but the life they live, is the exciting and attractive force. Individual members pass away, but the self-same life goes on, and the self-same influence continues to manifest itself on those brought within its sphere.

History teaches us that the practical Romans effected the subjugation of countries to their empire, not so much by the force of arms as by means of the gradual influence of the "colonies" they planted among the conquered races. These bodies of men were the real but unobserved conquerors of the world. They brought with them Roman laws and customs, Roman arts and civilisation, and by living among the people induced them of their own accord to adopt the manners, the language, and name of their conquerors. If the bishops and clergy are the rulers and governors of the Church's empire, and the religious orders its armies and its garrisons, the work effected by the mona-

stic order may not unaptly be compared to that of the Roman colonies. By the mere fact of settling among a people, and exhibiting to them the excellence and beauty of the Christian life, they won them insensibly to adopt the Christian creed and name, as by exhibiting the arts of peace in operation before the eyes of the uncultivated races of the Western world the monks taught them the value of a civilised life.

It has already been remarked that the monastery was a realisation of the ideal of Christianity. It is the spirit of the perfect Gospel teaching, embodied in tangible and visible realities. As a man by his appearance, his features, nay, by his very presence, testifies in a certain degree to the spirit which is within him, so the very walls of a monastery should speak to the beholder and draw him within the circle of its influence. It has, moreover, a voice of its own, which speaks a language all can understand, and has a weight and authority unknown to mere individual speech. That voice is the Divine Office. In this external language of the monastic life the monk speaks, not only to his Creator, but to his fellow-men as well. The perpetual round of prayer and praise is something more than an intercessory power. It, rightly understood, is the medium of intercourse between the monastic body and the people in the midst of which it dwells. No one is so dull that he cannot understand the faith in the unseen, the hope of another world, and the burning love of God which are manifested in the perennial sacrifice and song of praise of the monastic choir. Through the individual preaching of the monk, through his works, through his words of counsel and of comfort, through his hospitality, through his dealings with his fellow-men in all the varied

relations of life, he exercises some portion of his apostolate; but the choir of the monastery is the monk's real pulpit, and the daily Office his most efficacious sermon.

One who was not called to the monastic life has said, "It is in the cloister, and in the bosom of the sanctuary, where they passed their lives, that the monks have exercised the power of attraction which has drawn to them almost the entire world. The whole Church has, in a manner, established itself upon the monastic order, draws from it its spirit of virtue, and comes to it to renew in men's souls the worship and respect due to God."

Such, in brief, are the general principles upon which the monastic order was founded and has flourished for so many centuries. The illustrious author of *The Monks of the West* has described in his graphic pages the lives and works of many of the great men who, in virtue of the strength gained in the following out of these principles, have rendered the greatest service to the civilisation, no less than to the religion, of the nations of Western Europe. The account he presents in his pages of the power and influence of monachism in the West, without pretending to be a systematic and scientific history, is perhaps even on that account more useful to enable the ordinary reader to acquaint himself with that interesting story. Modern research and criticism would have caused the Count de Montalembert, had he now been revising his great work, sometimes to modify, or indeed in some few instances to rectify, the conclusions to which his studies at that time led him. But in the main the carefully drawn and life-like picture would still stand as his mind's eye saw it, and his master-hand sketched it, thirty years ago.

It has been before noted that the monastic order existed

in the early ages of the Church with the sole end of carrying out the counsels of the Gospel. This unity of object resulted in an essential unity, although in practice different monastic bodies followed out this end by the observance of a multiplicity of rules. To make this original position of Western monasticism clear, it is necessary to consider the matter somewhat more fully. Mabillon states that the end of the monastic state was always considered to be in brief the personal sanctification of the individual, intercessory prayer for the wants of others, and, when charity or some special necessity required, works undertaken for the good of the Christian commonwealth. In the time of St. Jerome and St. Augustine the monastic life was well recognised as an integral part of the Church's system. Not only was there no established code or rule to which all who desired to be monks were bound to conform themselves, but it was well understood that an individual might pass from this or that house to any other in which the monastic life was being led. In other words, the actual rule as a disciplinary code was altogether subordinated to the end, and this rule and method of life depended in great measure upon the will of the ruler of the monastery. Hence in many places one rule gave place to another according as circumstances changed, and not infrequently in one and the same place two or more rules were combined together; thus, according to St. Gregory of Tours, in the monastery of Ainay, they "followed the rules of St. Basil, Cassian, Cæsarius, and other Fathers, taking and using, that is, what seemed proper to the conditions of time and place."

In this respect, strange as it may seem, in days when our conceptions of conventual life are established upon ideas drawn from the example of modern religious institutes, the

introduction of the Benedictine rule was never intended to divide off those who followed it from the rest of the monastic body. The clerical order in the Church was regarded as one, though subject in minor matters to different disciplinary regulations in different parts of the Church. The canons of councils were for the clerical body what monastic rules were for monks. In the same way the monks of the West were one body, though following different rules, and there was no thought of the followers of St. Benedict forming an exclusive congregation or order, in the modern signification of those words. For the better carrying out of his ideal St. Benedict drew up a code of laws, characterised by a wide and wise discretion. To secure the end more certainly, those who desired to walk in the path of the Gospel counsels under his guidance, promised a life-long obedience. It was the first introduction of a "profession" for life, "according to the rule;" and it was known to the monk who "wished to fight under the law," that, as the rule says, "from that day it was not lawful for him to withdraw his neck from the yoke of the rule." The result of this introduction was twofold: on the one hand, it established firmly the perpetuity of the family life, that "stability in the community" which has since become the characteristic mark of monasticism; and on the other, for the only will of the abbot or superior it substituted a code of laws by which his government was to be guided. Nevertheless the rule itself shows that, though St. Benedict required obedience to his code of regulations, he never intended to forbid other customs and practices. In fact, he expressly refers his followers to the rule of St. Basil and others for further guidance. In the seventh and eighth centuries monks were not known as exclusive followers of Benedict, or

Cæsarius, or Columban, but as members of the monastic order; and St. Benedict's rule itself is not called the rule of this or that monastery, but the *Regula Monachorum*—the rule of monks. And although, in accordance with the monastic spirit, many a practice survived and many an observance was retained, which would be sought for in vain in the rule of St. Benedict, this came in fact to be the only recognised code whereby the life of every monastery in the West was ruled. Any one who will read the rule of St. Columban or St. Cæsarius will fully understand how this came to pass. The former is marked by rigid austerity in silence, in food, and in every kind of external mortification. The simplicity of its fundamental conception cannot be exceeded. It may be resumed in one sentence, "that a man may always depend on the word of another" (Cap. ix.): a principle sound indeed in itself, but still to pass from the influence of St. Columban to that of St. Benedict was a transition from the uncertain and the vague to the reign of law. In fact, neither the code of St. Cæsarius nor that of St. Columban is really a rule of life at all, the whole direction depending upon a discretion which might or might not be wisely exercised. That St. Benedict's legislation should have superseded all others was in the very nature of things inevitable. The difference of tone and form between his rule and that of others is unmistakable; and, however deep and intense the piety which breathes in the *Regula Cœnobialis* which goes under the name of St. Columban, it is a relief to pass from its crude expositions of monastic discipline to the grave and noble laws of the Roman monk. Under these circumstances it is not wonderful that by the end of the eighth century, not merely had St. Benedict's rule superseded all others, but in France the very memory

of any other code had so completely perished that it could be gravely doubted whether monks of any kind had existed before the time of this great monastic legislator, and whether there could be any other monks but Benedictines.

But it is necessary again to emphasise the fact that even here the spirit of exclusivism—that very negation of the whole Benedictine spirit—had no place. It is a failure to recognise this truth which has, for example, led many writers astray on the question of the rule followed at Jarrow and Wearmouth. They read that St. Benet Biscop collected the customs of seventeen monasteries, and argue that he must have composed a rule for his houses out of all these. Those who realise the Benedictine spirit and practice will understand that this selection of the customs of other monasteries is in no way inconsistent with the full observance of the rule of St. Benedict, and they will have no difficulty in telling what that "rule" is which St. Bede himself needed to designate by no more definite term than *The Rule*. Those not versed in these matters will perhaps take the authority of Alcuin, who was an intimate friend of the monks of Jarrow and Wearmouth, and who from residence there was perfectly competent to speak on the matter. After exhorting them to keep with the utmost diligence "the observance of regular life" which the "holy Fathers Benet and Ceolfrid established among you," he continues: "And let the rule of St. Benedict be often read in the gatherings of the brethren, and let it be explained in the native tongue, so that it may be understood by all. According to the instruction of which let every one correct his own life, so that what you have vowed to God before the altar may be inviolably kept."

The rule of St. Benedict having been commonly recog-

nised as the code for all monks throughout the West, it was inevitable that some sort of union between monasteries should come into existence. Each monastic family according to the rule is a separate unit, wholly distinct, and with an independent life of its own. These units were brought together in the great assembly of Aix-la-Chapelle, in A.D. 817, which, under the guidance of St. Benedict of Aniane, passed a number of rules for the better regulation of monastic life.[1] This assembly was no sudden resolution, but had long been designed. It is noteworthy that the idea of this gathering did not spring from the minds of men of Frankish race, nor from the ranks of those English strangers who for a century had played so great a part in the evangelisation and civilisation of the German races, and who in the old Christian land of the Franks had raised ecclesiastical life from the degradation into which it had sunk. It was not that these men did not understand the value of organisation, for it was an instrument they had used for laying the foundations of the Christian Church in Central Europe. It was not that as monks they were actuated by any small or grudging spirit, which impelled them to shut themselves up within the narrow circle of their own inherited traditions. They themselves went to seek in the monasteries of Italy for observances likely to benefit them and supplement their own practice; they were ready, under conditions, to use the help of those with whom they could have had little natural sympathy, as is evidenced by Alcuin making use

[1] I have great difficulty in thinking that the document printed in Megne, T. 99, col. 739 *seq.*, is correctly attributed to St. Simpert, Bishop of Augsburg. That it proceeds from one who was both bishop and abbot is certain; but it seems no less certain that its title and its attribution date only from the year 1550. It suits perfectly the spirit of the time from 814 to 816, but not, as it seems to me, 802 for instance.

of St. Benedict of Aniane for Cormery. They were essentially practical men, and unquestionably their action most effectually prepared the way for the meeting at Aix. But the assembly itself was designed by men actuated by a wholly different spirit—men who, in the reign of Charlemagne, had been kept in due subordination by that great ruler, and who had been employed by him with discretion, but who, under his worthy but weak-minded son, Lewis the Pious, became masters of the situation, and in the intrigues of the court held in their hands all the reins of power. These were the Goths of Aquitaine, a gifted race, but not capable, as the reign of Lewis shows, of supporting the weight of empire.

The prime agent, so far as the monastic movement of the time is concerned, was Benedict of Aniane, a man whose influence may be traced in the whole subsequent history of the Benedictine Order. Just as he was alien in race from the dominant Franks, so also he differed from the Anglo-Saxon in that, though schooled in a Benedictine monastery, he still regarded the rule of St. Benedict with something of impatient contempt, as not sufficiently rigid and austere. Time and experience, however, without changing his nature or effacing the characteristic traits of his race, brought him a more tempered and balanced judgment, and to this he was helped by the very breadth of St. Benedict's own conception of the monastic life.

Benedict of Aniane early initiated on a small scale in his native land the scheme which he fully matured in later years. He was appointed by Lewis Visitor-General of the monasteries in the kingdom of Aquitaine. History does not record in detail the steps he took to further his designs, nor the measure of his success; but by the death of

Charlemagne in A.D. 814, and the succession of Lewis to the Empire, he was placed in a position to carry his plans into execution. He was already past middle life, and no time was lost. The rapidity with which events succeeded one another shows that the whole scheme was already matured. Benedict had complete influence over the mind of the new Emperor, and there was no one whose word was so weighty in all affairs as that of the monk. Suitors of every grade, secular as well as ecclesiastical, came to understand that their request was granted if they could but win the good word of Benedict. Beyond, possibly, securing power for men of his own Gothic race, Benedict forebore to use his influence for furthering any policy of state, but gave his attention to plans upon which he had already set his heart for a monastic revival.

Not far from the imperial palace at Aix there rose as by enchantment, in the course of a year or two, the monastery which Lewis built for his monk Benedict. Here, as example is better than precept, were to be gathered the choicest spirits amongst his friends, and its thirty monks, with their abbot, were to form the model monastery upon which the numerous ancient houses scattered through the broad dominions of the Carolingian Empire were to reconstitute their lines. Hither might stranger monks come at the bidding of their abbots to inform themselves of the observances of Inde, and carry them back for adoption in their own houses.

Benedict's ideas were perfectly clear and definite. Every monastery and every monk in all his master's realms was to be like to himself and his. He aimed at a cast-iron system of uniformity, and herein lies the essential antagonism of spirit between Benedict of Aniane and the great Benedict.

The Assembly of 817 must certainly have been one of the most remarkable of the numerous gatherings in the heyday of the Carolingian Empire. Already, in 816, a great meeting had settled, with all the weight of imperial authority, the rule of life for the secular clergy, and especially for those living in common. The meeting of the abbots and monks was attended with every pomp and circumstance calculated to impress the imagination. At this general assembly of his people, Lewis associated with himself in his empire his first-born, Lothair, and crowned him Emperor, whilst he declared his two other sons kings of Aquitaine and Bavaria, carrying out that division of the Empire which was to be afterwards the source of such distress and fatal discord. From these matters of high estate Lewis passed at once to the great concern of his favourite Benedict, and the issue of the meeting of the 10th July 817, is recorded in a series of resolutions, which touch the whole range of the monastic life. Benedict's object was to secure that all monasteries should be reduced to such a uniformity in all things that it might seem as though "all had been taught by one single master in one single spot." There was designed to be uniformity in the quantity of food and drink, uniformity in the time of rising and going to rest, uniformity in their church services and their choir ceremonies, uniformity in the length and cut of the habit; in a word, absolute uniformity in everything.

It is clear from the documents that exist that Benedict was able to obtain assent to some only of the points of observance on which he had set his heart. Many he was obliged to give up to secure, as his biographer and admirer says, "any common unity, and out of consideration for the weaknesses of others." What was agreed upon, however,

was to be observed strictly. But the means taken to secure this were certainly not such as would have recommended themselves to the advisers and friends of Lewis's father, the great Charles, and they must have been the outcome of the counsels of Benedict himself, and of the people of his race, who were now supreme at court. By the imperial orders inspectors were to be placed in every monastery to see whether what had been ordered was in fact observed, and to train those who were ignorant of the new mode of life.

Such were the plans of Benedict, but they passed like a summer's dream. His scheme of a rigid uniformity among the monasteries of the Empire, secured by the appointment of himself as General, aided by an agent or inspector in each house—an idea wholly alien to the most elementary conception of Benedictine life—met with the fate it deserved. But in the customs thus imposed upon the monasteries by Lewis the Pious there was much that was very generally recognised as good and helpful, and adopted even beyond the confines of his empire. It was instinctively felt that some code supplementary to the rule was needed, and in these capitula of Aix may be recognised a draft of what are now called *constitutions*, declaratory of the rule.

It is not to be supposed, because Benedict of Aniane died before his hopes had been realised, and because his plans for monastic management were rendered impossible by the later confusions of Lewis's reign, that therefore his action produced no effect. On the contrary, it sent a thrill of life through the monastic system of the Empire. Everywhere it awoke a desire to rise to the requirement of the time, to aim at the best possible realisation of th. duties of the monastic state, and this naturally produced

effects visible beyond the sphere of religion. It is perhaps too readily assumed, because such vast progress, especially in the revival of letters, was made in the reign of Charlemagne, that therefore the whole work was done. Far from it: the masters and the pupils in the great central schools could then manipulate their Latin and write with a correctness which indicates an astonishing progress from the state of things fifty years before; but the great bulk of the manuscripts of even the later years of Charlemagne show that the ancient barbarisms had not disappeared, and that the ninth century, so generally regarded as an age of ruin and decay, was in truth, so far as letters are concerned, a time of continued progress. In that period a general level was attained which in Charlemagne's time could be reached only by the masters of learning. And if this be so, it is due to the activity generally prevailing in the monastic schools, an activity which, if in itself no certain criterion of excellence in discipline, at least raises the presumption that those amongst whom it prevailed were not altogether lost in spiritual torpor, but were animated with something of that heavenly fire of charity which must overflow in benefits to others.

In our own country of England we find the next movement in monastic government. It has been assumed, without sufficient consideration and knowledge, that the monastic life was practically extinct in England in the early days of the tenth century, surviving only in a few old men, who mumbled their matins in Glastonbury, and that the Benedictine rule was imported afresh—a foreign exotic—all complete from Fleury or from Ghent, whether by Dunstan or Odo, Ethelwold or Oswald it matters not. History teaches us that the monastic revival in England at

this period was essentially English in its origins and characteristics. If in the large-minded spirit of St. Benedict men went to learn the customs of Ghent and of Fleury, their mission did not take place till the close of those ten silent years Dunstan passed as abbot of Glastonbury, removed from all secular cares, and building up the spiritual edifice of his religious life. It was not until he had made his own trial and experience, and had formed men of his own kith and kin, and was thus ready to prove and approve, to accept and assimilate, or put aside as unfit for men of his race, what foreign monastic life could show, that he trusted his monks on their mission abroad.

After five and twenty years of practice, when the times were favourable in every sense, and Dunstan himself held the see of Canterbury, St. Ethelwold brought forth that "monastic *Concordia Regularis* of the English nation," which described and prescribed one customary use for the whole of England. The keynote of the *Concordia* is an intense spirit of nationality. This was only to be expected, in view of the political circumstances of a time when the land exulted in the reign of "Edgar the Glorious," "governor," "ruler," "king," "monarch," "basileus" of the whole of this isle of Albion, assisted by "his band of heroes." But here too it would be a mistake to imagine that any narrow spirit of exclusivism would be allowed. The whole ecclesiastical life of the nation was to be regenerated by inspirations largely drawn from the great days of the renewed Western Empire, from the legislation of Charlemagne, and of the early days of Lewis the Pious. It was no mere copy, but a thorough assimilation of what might wisely and safely be adopted by the advisers of Edgar. It is in this way that, joined to the English *Concordia Regularis*, are so

often found the Capitula of Aix, which were the outcome of the influence of Benedict of Aniane.

With the details of the legislation found in the *Concordia* we have no concern, and attention need be directed only to one point. Twice in the course of the short Preface or Prologue it justly mentions the quality of discretion as having presided at its compilation, and it was ordained that in future nothing whatever should be added to it except by common consent. The document itself is not concerned with any scheme of government; it is taken for granted that this was on normal lines, and no provision is made for any centralised organisation or general meetings. But, for all that, it was not a document thrown out to take its chance; quite the contrary. Though no scheme of government was propounded, a practical measure was provided for in the mind of its originator, St. Ethelwold. He conceived in reality much the same plan as did St. Benedict of Aniane; the pivot on which he would make the whole machinery of government turn was the king. The election of all abbots and abbesses, although conducted in accordance with the teaching of the rule, required the royal assent. This measure was dictated by the desire to free the monasteries from the interference of local magnates; but the superiors were directed to address the king and queen in all their needs, and to come to the court in person. This prominence of the king is emphasised in many ways throughout the whole *Concordia*.

Ethelwold's idea seems to have been this: that agreement on constitutions once secured there was no need for further or formal meetings, because the authority of the king could be invoked at all points, and direct recourse had to him, whilst he, Ethelwold, was himself at the king's

side, his perpetual counsellor and confidant, and ready to see that all was rightly done. But the saint, even from his own point of view, failed to take into account the uncertain chances of human life. Almost immediately a stroke of Providence removed Edgar, and in the troubles that followed the whole machinery as he had planned it broke down.

Here, again, though his attempt failed, the work accomplished was in reality great. Each monastery was once more thrown back on its own resources, but with a definite idea to aim at, and efforts were concentrated on work at home, with what results for the public benefit, no less than for their own discipline, the outcome of the school of Winchester alone is direct evidence.

But it was not in England only that the movement set on foot by the master-spirit Dunstan, and formulated in the provisions of the *Concordia Regularis*, exercised its influence. In the last years of the century there proceeded from Einsiedeln a powerful reform, which put a new life into many monasteries of Southern Germany, but the importance of which has been obscured by the much later Hirschau imitation of Cluny. The curious conformity of the Einsiedeln statutes at the end of the tenth century with the English *Concordia* was long ago noticed. The resemblance is not accidental: in the second half of that century Einsiedeln was ruled by an English stranger, Gregory, who by the votes of his brethren was placed in the abbatial chair. Is it too much to imagine that Gregory had learnt in England, before the *Concordia* was drawn up, the traditional practices of the monasteries of his native land?

The English movement initiated by Dunstan is only one of many which proved the vitality of the monastic idea in the West. Everywhere abroad during the tenth century the same

phenomenon of new life, springing up from many centres, presents itself. These manifestations are so numerous, and there is so much action and interaction, that it is impossible in a mere sketch like this to give even a bare outline. In Western France, in Burgundy, in Lorraine, in Western Germany and Central Italy, the forms were varied, and in details the movements varied still more, but all witnessed the soundness of that instinct which led St. Benedict, having set men in the right road, to trust to their innate desire for the good and the right to lead them along the path of the Gospel counsels, rather than to impel them by superfluous external machinery. There is, however, one exception—in some respects the greatest name in all monastic history—Cluny. This demands special notice as a fresh starting-point, and as the practical introduction of a new idea in monastic government. It is not necessary to consider here how or under what circumstances the system was developed. The ideal of Cluny was the existence of one great central monastery with dependencies, even by the hundred, spread over many lands, and forming a vast feudal hierarchy. The subordinate monasteries were dependents in the strictest sense. The superior of every house, however great—as, for example, the priory of Lewes—was the nominee of the abbot of Cluny; the profession of every member even in remote England or Spain was made in the name and with the sanction of the abbot of Cluny. It was a mighty dream, and the realisation of it was fully equal to the conception. The abbot of Cluny was the general of an army in the strictest subordination to its chief; and it must be said that for the first two centuries the abbots form a dynasty worthy of so lofty a position, so vast a power.

The name of this great house has exercised over some

minds a singular fascination, and many are led to attribute to it an influence which it did not in fact exercise, and assign to it men whom it did not form. Still, after all possible deductions have been made, Cluny remains one of the chief factors in the history of the eleventh century. But all its glory and all its greatness must not blind us to the weakness inherent in the system, a weakness precisely consequent on its deflection from the mere simplicity of St. Benedict's ideas. It is clear, in the first place, that the Cluny system of dependencies cut at the root of the family life, without which (except under extraordinary safeguards) the Benedictine life cannot permanently maintain itself. The house of Cluny was more than a mere centre of a vast system; it was the very mainspring of its life, and source of all its government, and if that spring were broken, or even weakened, there was no chance of renewal. Moreover, the greatness of Cluny was kept up in a fictitious way, and if for a time the means adopted sustained the great edifice, it only resulted in more complete ruin when the collapse came. If there is one point in monastic government about which St. Benedict legislates clearly it is that the abbot should be the elect of the monks. Cluny, whether intentionally or unintentionally, adopted methods whereby practically the ruling abbot could secure the nomination of his successor. Not that the choice actually made did not perhaps result in the general good of the house, for in truth it was the great qualities of the abbots of Cluny which kept up the system so long. But the glory of Cluny was secured at the expense of the solidity of its inner life, and herein lies the explanation of the fact that when Cluny fell, it fell suddenly and from the highest point of its exterior glory. Resting, as this highly centralised system had come to do, on the one

person of its abbot, when the crash came it was found that its life had gone beyond the power of recuperation. As a community Cluny was dead. If a great institution could be saved by a single man, that man certainly was Peter the Venerable, whose character is one of the most beautiful in the whole range of monastic history; but having admitted false principles of government, not consonant with the ideas of St. Benedict, the Cluniacs became the victims of their own creation.

It is possible to see early in its history the rock upon which the great institution split. It was only a question of time when the spirit, indicated by the claim to the title *abbas abbatum*, would degenerate into a keen appreciation of dignities and distinctions, of exemptions and privileges, and would find therein a satisfaction which no formal renunciation of the world could render monastic. Excellent as may have been the intention of those who first sought for Cluny and all its dependencies freedom from episcopal interference, not the less is it certain that herein lay the elements of a danger for the monastic order. By such an emancipation it sought to constitute itself a body corporate, distinct and apart, instead of forming, as the monastic order on the lines of St. Benedict was intended to do, an element in the full life of the Christian Church. The chances of a renewal of vigour springing up in, and radiating from, a dozen different centres were gone under the Cluniac system of a complete centralisation. It was in vain that Peter the Venerable called round him to a chapter priors who might be numbered by the hundred; in vain were new statutes promulgated by the *capituli universalis assensu*; in vain that all this legislation is declared to be according "to the counsel of brethren wise and fearing God," and not by the mere

will of the abbot-general. By the very system of Cluny the priors were but the shadows of the abbot, and no house, not even the greatest monastery, had any inherent principle of life, but was doomed to follow the fate of its centre.

It was but natural that a reaction should set in when men's eyes were opened to what really stood behind those glories of Cluny, so conspicuous during the lifetime of St. Hugh. The revulsion manifested itself outwardly in the rise of many orders, whether of monks or of canons regular, about this time. People longed for something more simple —for a life disburdened from the excessive pomp and circumstance which had grown up round Cluny. It was instinctively felt that there was a danger of lapsing into mere formalism, and it is in some such explanation as this, rather than in that of their being a protest against any grave relaxation of the monastic life, that we must understand the rise of the Cistercians. It was by no mere accident that Peter the Venerable and St. Bernard found themselves in antagonism. What immediately concerns us here is the question of government, and strange as it may appear on this point, Citeaux only brought to full development the germ already implanted in the system of Cluny. Practically the Cluniac system of government constituted it an Order, but by the method of establishing one scattered family. Citeaux for the first time struck out a new line, which carried it farther from St. Benedict's idea. Whilst preserving the notion of each monastery as a family, endowed with the principle of fecundity, it formed itself into an Order in the modern sense of an organised corporation.

The basis of the Cistercian system lies in the perpetual pre-eminence of the abbot and house of Citeaux, combined with the yearly assembly in that monastery of all the abbots

of the "order." The end to be attained by this highly centralised system is put forward by its originator, St. Stephen Harding, an Englishman who at an early age had left his own country and never returned thither. In the plainest terms he states his intention. "Now we will and we order," he says, "all monks in the confederation to observe the rule of St. Benedict in all things as it is observed in the New Monastery—that is, to induce no other meaning into their reading of the Holy Rule but what the holy fathers, our predecessors (that is, the monks of the New Monastery), have understood and held." Accordingly, as a natural consequence, "We also will that they abide by the customs and the chant, and have all the books for office and mass, according to the form of the customs and the books of the New Monastery." Absolute uniformity was a natural corollary of such a form of government, and this was secured, besides the annual meeting of abbots, by an annual visitation of every monastery. To the abbot of Citeaux was secured a right of visiting any and every monastery at will; but it was provided that he was not to interfere with the temporalities and the ordinary business of any house against the wish of its abbot and brethren, although in enforcing discipline he was absolute. This, so far, at least recognised the individuality of each monastery as is contemplated by St. Benedict.

Looking at the document upon which the Cistercian system was founded, the *Carta Caritatis*, its main design as a system of government was to safeguard by every possible means the "New Monastery" (that is, Citeaux) and its abbot. It is true that the abbot of any monastery which had founded another retained always certain rights and duties in regard to the daughter-houses, and that

to the four great daughter-houses of Citeaux were secured certain special rights and privileges which gave them apparently a commanding position, and made the semblance of a hierarchical organisation. Yet the predominant position of Citeaux is carefully secured—on the one hand, by the provision that there should be no chapter or other official meeting of abbots except the one general chapter, to be held always at Citeaux; and, on the other, by the declaration that in case of dissent in this chapter the decision absolutely lay with the abbot of Citeaux and those who, siding with him, appear to be of the *sanior pars*.

It is obvious that in a system established on the lines of the "Charter of Charity" everything must depend on the centre. This the composer of the document evidently felt to be the weak point of the system, and to it he devoted the last sections of the document. As we read them, notwithstanding the brandishing of the sword of excommunication over the abbot and convent of Citeaux in the last resort, it is impossible not to feel their practical futility. Events subsequently showed that this was so; and the proof lies in the history of the order itself. The Bernardines of Italy and the Feuillants of France could only come into existence and breathe freely by tearing up the Charter of Charity. By the very organisation of the system, that which long centuries of Benedictine history has shown to be a certainty—the spontaneous springing up of renewed life and energy, sometimes even in the most unexpected quarters, and the power of free development—was rendered impossible.

Moreover, in one particular the Charter of Charity gives utterance to an idea clearly alien to the mind of St. Benedict. The expression "our Order" occurs again and again in this short document, no longer in the sense of

a method of life common to every monastery, but of a corporation excluding all not distinctly on its own lines. With Citeaux the Religious Order, in its modern signification, appears fully developed, and it was but another step in the same direction to the system of the Mendicants in the thirteenth century.

The rush of Cistercian development in Western Europe, and the manifest decline of Cluny influence, are calculated to arrest the attention, and in so far perhaps to conceal from us the fulness of activity which in reality characterised the monastic order generally in the twelfth century. It is useless to burden these pages with any list of centres of monastic action at this period, which are to be found also in remote Scotland and Scandinavia, Poland and Hungary, and the attention of the reader is directed here merely to the main currents of Benedictine life. It must be borne in mind that the adoption of Cluny customs by no means necessarily implied any adoption of its spirit, and the real and most lasting good effected by Cluny for the monastic order generally was that it undoubtedly sent a current of renewed life through the entire system. This manifested itself in many new beginnings and reconstitutions of older foundations, which, however, in themselves, when closely examined, seem to be in fact reactions against the method and tendency of Cluniac centralisation. At Camaldoli and Monte Vergine in Italy, as at Grandmont or the Chartreuse in France, the inclination was towards a more secluded and eremitical life, whilst at Vallumbrosa there was a closer imitation of Cluny on a small scale. The abbot of Vallumbrosa, as head of the congregation—the elect, by the way, of the superiors of the few monasteries which formed it, and not of his community—was possessed

of the general regimen of the entire union, every house of which was thus in strict subordination to the central authority. In process of time, however, the natural tendency of a powerful head to seek further power and position at the expense of the members showed itself in securing perpetuity for the abbot of Vallumbrosa as an irremovable abbot-general, and in the reduction of the superiors of the other houses to the position of nominees of a yearly general chapter; whilst yet another step in the same direction was taken by a provision requiring the assent of the abbot-general for the reception of all subjects ot the congregation.

In Germany, also, Hirschau set before itself Cluny as a model, and by its measure of success powerfully aided, in the restoration and foundation of many monastic centres. But, be the cause what it may, the abbot of Hirschau certainly failed to create for himself a position of pre-eminence and sole dominion, such as had been that of the abbots of Cluny. In Western France the practical reaction against the Cluniac spirit was chiefly manifested by houses like Bec and Tiron, which, whilst maintaining an excellent observance, and whilst ready to communicate the secrets of good discipline and success to their neighbours, left their special customs to make their way by virtue of their own intrinsic merits. Great were the results achieved by their influence, even in distant lands.

Indeed, among the Black Benedictines generally there was a conscious recoil from the Cluniac system in the first half of the twelfth century, manifesting itself by the introduction of a form of union consonant with the spirit of St. Benedict. The abbots of a number of monasteries in what is now Belgium and Northern France met together in chapter for mutual counsel and support, and

resolved to introduce into their houses certain changes in regard to observance and choral duties. The chapters were to be annual, but no provision appears to have been made for mutual visitations, which in most cases of course remained entirely in the hands of the bishops. It is probable that the intention to promote capitular meetings was fully carried out, though the actual notices of such assemblies are scanty. Nor was this the only example of chapters of this kind. A few years later the abbots of Saxony assembled to discuss and settle matters of monastic life and discipline, and later still those of the ecclesiastical province of Rouen. It is to be observed that these are spontaneous movements, coming from the monasteries themselves, and not imposed by external authority, and they clearly indicate a feeling that some such change was wanted to meet the needs and requirements of the day. The importance of the movement, however, does not lie in the particular results immediately obtained, but in the fact that they were the prelude to the system to which the Church in a General Council has given her sanction, for safeguarding the monastic life.

In the Fourth Lateran Council, held under Innocent III., in 1215, the following directions were given for holding everywhere national or provincial chapters by the Black monks. After speaking of the rights of the diocesan bishops, the twelfth Canon directs that every three years, in each province or kingdom, a chapter of abbots and conventual priors should be held in some conveniently situated monastery. They are advised, whilst unacquainted with the method of holding such meetings, to invite two Cistercian abbots of the neighbourhood to give them counsel and help in matters of procedure. For, as the Canon

says, "the Cistercians have long been accustomed to the way of holding such chapters." These two White abbots were to associate with themselves two Benedictine monks, and the four were to preside at the first meeting. It was, however, expressly provided that none of these presidents should take to himself any authority of a superior, so that they could be changed if it seemed convenient. The business of the meeting was to treat of the improvement of regular observance; and whatever was agreed upon, provided it met with the approval of the presidents, was to be observed by all without appeal. Moreover, in each chapter certain prudent and religious men were to be nominated to visit, in the name of the Pope, every Benedictine house of the province, to correct where correction seemed necessary. If in these visitations they should find any abbot worthy of deposition, they were to denounce him to the bishop of the diocese, who was to take the steps necessary for his removal, and if the bishop would not act they were to refer the case to the Holy See. The bishop was further to see that the monasteries in his diocese were in good order, "so that when the aforesaid visitors come there, they may find them worthy rather of commendation than correction; being, however, careful not to make his visitations a burden or expense, so that the rights of superiors be maintained without injury to the subjects."

By these provisions, it is obvious, a double security was provided for the wellbeing of the monasteries. The bishops were still maintained in the position they had always occupied as visitors, and as judges where the conduct of the superior might give occasion to the gravest censures. At the same time, by providing that the monasteries should also be visited every three years by monks chosen by the

provincial chapters, but acting as delegates of the Holy See, any failure of the bishop to fulfil his duty as diocesan, or any incapacity to understand the practical working of the monastic life, would receive the necessary corrective.

The system sketched out in the Council of Lateran satisfied a need long felt as the outcome of practical experience. It was but the outline of a scheme the details of which had to be supplied in the working; but this had its advantages, inasmuch as it enabled the monks of different countries to adopt measures suitable to their own people and circumstances. If worked with good will, whilst preserving to each monastery the ancient Benedictine principle of family autonomy, it was calculated to afford the valuable aids of co-operation and the security of mutual support. It may be said that the English Benedictine monks, and they alone, gave the system a fair trial. At the outset they set themselves to overcome difficulties, and allowed practical experience to point out the way by which deficiencies might be made good. England at the time, just after the death of King John, with the French invasion, and the whole country in a turmoil, was hardly the land in which, it might be thought, such an experiment could be tried with much promise of success. Still, within three years after the Lateran Council, the first chapter had been already held (1218), and those assembled had even then come to feel that there was a real danger of making grave blunders. Without promulgating their decrees, they met again the next year at St. Albans to rectify their mistakes, but still they refrained from publishing any statutes, leaving time for further deliberation and experience to make sure of their ground, so as not to commit themselves to directions which could not in practice be observed. It was consequently not until 1225 that the *Statuta* of the first

chapters were issued, and the appointment of the visitors shows that the plan of general chapters ordered by the Council had been reduced to a practical system.

In England, in curious distinction to the rest of Europe, the scheme, once set well on foot, was maintained with regularity to the end. It was in this supported by the tenacious adherence to the old relation subsisting between the monastery and the bishop of the diocese, as was intended by the provisions of the Lateran. For, although five of the abbeys of England claimed exemption from episcopal jurisdiction, the rest of the Benedictine houses in the land, without exception, including some of the greatest and most wealthy monasteries of Christendom, were not so exempt, and never thought of trying to withdraw themselves from inclusion in the general law of the Church.

The system, complex as it may appear to the theorist, in practice worked thoroughly well. In England, under its influence, the monasteries maintained their prestige, and secured in general good discipline. Of course there were individual failures here and there, but the system so worked that they were inevitably brought to light, and the evil could be checked before the harm done was irremediable. Every two or three generations the English monks reviewed their practice, and adapted themselves to changed circumstances, but history shows that they never introduced, or indeed needed, any startling reforming principles. As a whole, they secured and retained to the last the respect of the Catholic people of England. Whilst the revenues of most of the great Benedictine houses abroad were appropriated by sovereigns, prelates, and nobles, in this country—although the English kings were not less needy nor less wilful, and the English nobles not more

wealthy nor more self-denying than those of other lands—none of the abbeys fell into the hands of commendatory abbots until, as a single exception, Wolsey obtained possession of St. Albans. Even this monastery at the cardinal's death fell back for the last days of its existence into the hands of a regular abbot. The English nature is not more patient of all the small restrictions and restraints to which the common life of a monastery subjects the monk; yet to the last not a single English Benedictine house ever even thought of secularisation. If this be so it is simply owing to the fact that the monasteries of England frankly accepted, and loyally carried out, the system proposed to them by the Lateran Council—a system wholly consonant with the spirit and tradition of the Benedictine Order.

This system of government was never changed in England, although modified and perfected in certain details. The famous Bull *Benedictina*, of 1336, found the English monks perfectly organised and prepared to carry out its provisions. In point of government it made no appreciable difference, although it was to them a summons to greater efficiency. The characteristic mark of all English Benedictine legislation, as seen in the statutes of chapters and in visitation injunctions, is common-sense and discretion. Nowhere are the English monks backward in stating their objection to measures impracticable for the English, which were suggested for their acceptance, whilst they showed themselves perfectly ready to adopt changes which were practical and workable. The details of this interesting story are at hand, but the limits of our present subject exclude any fuller description.

Turning to foreign countries it is useless to attempt to gauge the results of the Lateran legislation, for the simple

reason that no country but England appears to have taken the Council seriously. There were, it is true, efforts here and there, chapters held for a time, without apparent sequence or determined perseverance. The consequence was inevitable in times of intellectual upheaval, of civil disturbance, and of constantly increasing luxury among ecclesiastics as well as laymen. The wealth of the monasteries was tempting, and they fell an easy prey to the great in Church and State. Kings, nobles, cardinals, and prelates obtained nominations to abbeys, and absorbed revenues of houses in which they felt little interest, and which too often they allowed to go to ruin. Vocations naturally fell off, and communities were reduced to a mere handful, living on a pittance grudgingly doled out to them by the ecclesiastics or laymen who claimed to be their commendatory abbots.

In France the great Cistercian movement seems to have exhausted the soil of those religious forces which might have turned men to a renewal of Benedictine life. Italy, no more than France, recognised the opportunity afforded by the Council of Lateran for revivifying its ancient abbeys; but, unlike France, it still possessed a reserve of monastic force which manifested itself in the institution of the Silvestrines, the Celestines, and early in the fourteenth century of the Olivetans. The importance of these new institutes lies in the fact that they gradually advanced towards that form of government which became most general among the Benedictines throughout Europe in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. They each mark steps in the development. The earliest, the Silvestrines, were constituted with perpetual superiors under one head, the Prior of Monte Fano, who, as General, governed in conjunction with a chapter representative of the houses. The next in order

of date, the Celestines, had a similar organisation, except in one important point—the Superiors were not perpetual, and the head of the Institute was an abbot, but elected by general chapter for a term of three years only, and ineligible till after a period of nine years had elapsed.

The Olivetans mark the last stage. The monks were not professed for any particular monastery, but, like the friars, for the general body of the congregation. Officials were appointed by a small committee, nominated by the general chapter, and for short periods only, and the abbot-general was also visitor of the various monasteries, as well as "superior of superiors," his power being limited by various practical checks, and by the fact that his authority was for a very short period only. The system offered, as is evident, the strongest contrast to that of Cluny, the results of which were now patent to all the world; and under it the existence of commendatory superiors was practically impossible. It, moreover, destroyed any local attachment to a house, and broke up the family life, which is the central idea of St. Benedict's legislation; and further, it abolished also all perpetuity of office, and, taking from the monastic communities rights of election, it concentrated all real power in the hands of a small committee.

The great councils of the fifteenth century, the avowed object of which was "reform in head and members," occupied themselves seriously also with the condition of the monastic order. But already in many quarters, independently, the monks had busied themselves with that question, and had taken practical steps to renew their vigour. They thus afforded another example of their inherent power of spontaneous renewal as distinct from exterior pressure, which from century to century has ever animated the Benedictines.

These movements took two distinct paths. One in Italy, carrying out the lines already laid down by the Olivetans, was initiated by the congregation of St. Justina of Padua, afterwards called the Cassinese, and this formed later a model for the monks of France and Spain. The second was confined to Germanic lands, and of this the union of Bursfeld, which maintained the traditional lines, may be taken as a type. It is necessary briefly to sketch the early history of the institute of St. Justina of Padua. It owed its origin to the zeal of a noble Venetian, Ludovico Barbo, who had become commendatory abbot of the monastery of St. Justina, and who, subsequently embracing the monastic state, determined to restore regular life in his monastery. For this purpose he was joined by a few members of other religious bodies, including two Olivetan monks. Within the space of a few years, however, houses in other parts of Italy desired to join him in his venture, and in the year 1421 these monasteries, four in number, found themselves in a position to propose to the Pope a scheme of union. The chief points in the proposals thus submitted and subsequently approved were the following: although professed in different monasteries, the monks did not belong to any house by their profession, but to the general body of the congregation, and were to be esteemed as members of any house in which they might happen for the time to be placed. Secondly, the most ample power was possessed by the annual general chapter, which appointed four or more visitors, one of whom was to have the position of president. He was to transact all business concerning the general welfare of the union; but for everything the assent of the other visitors was required, and he was bound to direct himself according to the decrees and instructions

of the chapter. These officials consequently were mere deputies of the chapter, to which they were bound to render strict account of all their acts.

Ludovico Barbo himself at once saw that the inevitable issue of his system was that superiors must cease to be perpetual, and the elect of their convents. Consequently he at once resigned his position, and transferred the obedience of his monks to the visitors elected by the first general chapter of 1421. Within the next few years the three other houses also came to recognise that the principles of the system were inconsistent with superiors holding office in perpetuity, and withdrew from the union. St. Justina of Padua was thus left to follow out alone its system, which at the time some considered contrary to the Benedictine profession—an opinion which, in 1432, called forth a bull from Pope Eugenius IV., constituting the new congregation part of the order and rule of St. Benedict. In this document the provisions of the union were defined and approved. A small committee of the chapter had the appointment of all superiors and officials, and could dispose of all monastic property as they deemed best for the general interests of the body. In order to concentrate all authority within the congregation itself, appeals from the chapter decisions to the Holy See were expressly forbidden, and outside interference of every kind was thus guarded against.

The new congregation now busied itself in obtaining from the Popes extensive privileges, amongst the rest, that no monastery which joined the body could be held *in commendam*, nor any pension charged on the revenues of a house, even by the Pope himself. The leading idea of Ludovico Barbo was a desire to cut at the root of the vicious system of commendatory abbots, an evil which he

saw entailed the ruin of the monastery and the collapse of all regular discipline, and which could be coped with only by some powerful organisation; and in viewing the picture presented by a house like Polirone in the first half of the sixteenth century, it is easy to understand the charm exercised by the life of these monks on those who, like Pole, were admitted to their intimacy. In less than a century the congregation of St. Justina of Padua, now under the title of the Cassinese Congregation, embraced all the great Benedictine houses of Italy.

In this system it is obvious that the monastery, as such, had no independent life or existence. All power was gathered up into the hands of a small committee of eight or nine members, called *Definitors*, chosen by chapter, and who appointed the visitors and President to rule the congregation out of chapter. Everything, from the appointment of the President even down to that of the cellarer of the smallest house, was in their hands. The danger to the system, besides its departure from the Benedictine ideal, lay in this, that by the election and re-election of the same visitors and definitors all power would be kept in the hands of a small body of managers, and by this means, in practice, the very perpetuity would be brought about which the system had been devised to guard against. This, in fact, did happen, as we learn on the authority of Pope Leo X., who had been commendatory abbot of Monte Cassino, and as such had resigned his abbey to the congregation of St. Justina of Padua, with which, as he says, he had an intimate acquaintance. He prescribed as a remedy for the evil that no one should be re-elected for the highest offices of the congregation till after the lapse of a certain period. This legislation, however, was a few years later withdrawn

by Pope Adrian VI. at the instance of a powerful party in the congregation, and the internal history of the body from this time forward manifests a constant struggle between those who wished to revive the legislation of Leo X. and a small party who desired to retain the power in their hands. It seems clear that the hopes of maintaining the congregation in vigour and life lay with the former; as a fact, after nearly a century of strife, the latter obtained the victory.

It is unnecessary for the present purpose to dwell at any length on the French congregations of St. Vannes and St. Maur, which in the seventeenth century modelled their statutes on those of St. Justina. They really aim at the same object, though presenting in details points of direct contrast. Thus among the Cassinese it is expressly prescribed that the President is not to be called General, and his powers are carefully restricted; but he and the Cassinese abbots generally, though not blessed, were allowed all the dignity and state of episcopal pontificalia. The "Superior-General" of the congregation of St. Maur, on the other hand, though possessing much real power, was strictly prohibited from using mitre, staff, or cross, and was dressed as the other monks.

The Spanish congregation deserves a somewhat more detailed notice. It was formed by the gradual union of the Benedictine houses in Spain to the royal monastery of Valladolid, which had been founded at the close of the fourteenth century, and had always maintained the highest reputation for regularity and observance. As this had been the centre of the union, the Superior of the house, elected by the votes of his community, long maintained pre-eminence, and took the title of General. As the number of

monasteries linked together in the congregation increased, the office of abbot-general was detached from the house of Valladolid, and became elective in the general chapter. The powers of this General were considerable, and he was the only ordinary visitor of the congregation; but in practice his action was controlled by three nominees of chapter, called definitors-judges, who formed a standing court of appeal from his decisions, and by the association with him of a secretary and a *socius* chosen for him by chapter, who were always at his side. But the most important difference between the congregations of Spain and Italy lay in the fact that the Spanish jealously maintained the family system designed by St. Benedict as far as was possible under a scheme in which the superiors were not perpetual, and were chosen by the general chapter. Every monk made his profession for a house, to the family of which he belonged, and every house maintained in all things its own independent life. The abbots, although only elected for the space of four years, were the real rulers of their monasteries, and nominated all their officials.

This Spanish congregation has a special interest for English people, since the English monks who revived their order in the early days of the seventeenth century, consistently adopted the system of Spain in all points which characteristically distinguish that system from that of the Cassinese, except the generalate.

The movement for renewal in Germany in the fifteenth century took another direction. It attempted no novelties, retaining perpetuity of superiors and profession for the monastery; and in its most successful effort—the union of Bursfeld—really set itself, though tardily, to carry out the system prescribed by the general chapter of the Lateran and

the Bull *Benedictina*, which had been successfully worked in England from the first. It was a union of independent monasteries joined together for common purposes, and in particular for the maintenance of regular discipline by means of periodical visitations. Whilst preserving to each house the Benedictine principle of autonomy, the Bursfeld Union yet secured for all the help and strength derived from co-operation. It admitted, indeed, in some measure, the vicious principle of a "head monastery" in Bursfeld, but in practice this was neutralised by the singular discretion of the abbots. The political state of the country, and the jealousies of petty potentates, both secular and ecclesiastical, interfered with the full success of this congregation, but in spite of all difficulties it achieved a great work, and showed, as England had done before, the wisdom of the Fathers of the Lateran and of Pope Benedict XII.

Other efforts at the same period in the south of Germany had less enduring effects. They too were greatly hampered by the condition of the Austrian lands in that age, and their methods and legislation betray a want of attention to the great principles of monasticism, which on the whole were firmly grasped by the Bursfeld union, and a concentration on the minutiæ of the religious life, which in St. Benedict's idea were intended to vary according to circumstances. The religious revolution of the sixteenth century fell with fatal effect upon them, but happily in the revival of Catholic life in Germany the Benedictine monasteries shared in the general renewal, and issued in local congregations like the Swiss and Bavarian. If at the close of the last century they fell victims to the greed of secular potentates, it was not from interior weakness, for the communities were large, full of life and vigour, and exercising a beneficent

influence in the districts in which they were placed; and if, after the storm of civil revolution passed, several were revived, it was due to the kindly and keen recollection of the benefits they had conferred on the people of the country.

In the ordinary course of human affairs the means whereby great and wide-reaching results are achieved is the concentrated effort of a directed organism. As the mind passes in review the action of the monastic order in the past centuries, it cannot but be struck by the fact that, whilst the Benedictines have indeed achieved a work which has left its enduring impress on the religious and social history of Europe, their history is specifically characterised by a want of definite organisation.

The explanation of this apparent contradiction between great achievement and the neglect of that which human prudence would have dictated as necessary for attaining any great and permanent result is easy. St. Benedict grasped fully in things divine the law of contradiction, which is the surest basis of the Christian life and effort—a law which lies on the surface of the Gospel story, and is confirmed by the deeper considerations which are rooted in the Gospel teaching. It issued in the contradiction of the Cross, and found its expression in such words of our Lord as, "He that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it." The results achieved by the Monastic Order have not been obtained by the exercise of power, but of influence. Their action upon society was that of the personal influence of the family, not that of the impersonal agency of the State.

The history of a religious order is the practical manifestation of the spirit and mind of the founder. It is an integral

part of his life. There can be no doubt that at a certain period some idea of an organised body suggested itself to the mind of St. Benedict; but with mature experience and an ever-growing insight into divine things he relinquished the government of his many monasteries to confine himself to the care of the single family of Monte Cassino. Nor can it be said that the observance of the rule he wrote was in his conception to be confined to a single house, or even to his own country. He clearly saw that its use might spread to other lands, and might have to be adapted to conditions wholly different from those of his native Italy. In these circumstances the very absence of any direction for organisation must be taken as a true and sincere expression of his inmost mind.

Having laid down lines for the government of a Christian family desirous of living according to the Gospel counsels, St. Benedict left the good that might result from its action on the Church and the world to God's Providence, and to be determined by the needs and circumstances of time and place. And so it has come about. "St. Benedict," writes Cardinal Newman, "found the world physical and social in ruins, and his mission was to restore it in the way —not of science, but of nature; not as if setting about to do it; not professing to do it by any set time, or by any series of strokes, but so quietly, patiently, gradually, that often till the work was done it was not known to be doing. It was a restoration, rather than a visitation, correction, or conversion."

And in fact the greatest works of the Monastic Order for religion, for civilisation and for learning, were effected without set design. When the Church had need for its aid and support it was found that by its inherent vitality

it had grown into, and strengthened itself for, what was required of it. Few things in ecclesiastical history are so remarkable as the perpetual renewal of the Benedictine spirit, springing up within the order itself and manifesting itself in various forms. For this St. Benedict in his rule left no provision beyond what is implied in the exercises of the monastic daily life of prayer and labour, and discipline of mind and heart. And the history of the order shows that there was no need for any such provision, that if the life here and there became for a time relaxed, there was always within it a reserve of power and strength which could not long be repressed, but would break forth in new beginnings, and which, by way "not of science but of nature," would wake again into life those perhaps grown languid by lapse of time.

The genius of Cardinal Newman has caught the very spirit of St. Benedict's followers, as manifested in the history of the past, when he recognises the order as "an organisation, diverse, complex, and irregular, and variously ramified, rich rather than symmetrical, with many origins and centres and new beginnings, and the action of local influences. . . . Instead of progressing on plan and system, and from the will of a superior, it has shot forth and run out as if spontaneously, and has shaped itself according to events, from an irrepressible fulness of life within, and from the energetic self-action of its parts, like those symbolical creatures in the prophet's vision which went every one of them straightforward, whither the impulse of the Spirit was to go."

It was a perception of this truth which must have inspired the Count de Montalembert, a statesman, a politician, a litterateur, a man of the world, to devote so much of his

life to the study of the history of the Monastic Order in the West, and to have dedicated to the telling of the story the full maturity of his powers. He recognised in the very simplicity of its methods, and in the resolute cheerfulness of its spirit, that it has a service to render to the world of to-day.

F. A. GASQUET.

August 1895.

CONTENTS

PAGE

DEDICATION v

A SKETCH OF MONASTIC CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY . . vii

INTRODUCTION

CHAP.

I. ORIGIN OF THIS WORK 1

II. FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER OF MONASTIC INSTITUTIONS . 7

III. OF THE TRUE NATURE OF MONASTIC VOCATIONS . . . 15

IV. SERVICES RENDERED TO CHRISTENDOM BY THE MONKS . . 30

V. HAPPINESS IN THE CLOISTER 48

VI. CHARGES AGAINST THE MONKS—MONASTIC WEALTH . . 75

VII. DECLINE 94

VIII. RUIN 124

IX. THE TRUE AND FALSE MIDDLE AGES 144

X. OF THE FORTUNE OF THIS BOOK 172

BOOK I

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AFTER THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH . 185

BOOK II

MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE EAST 211

BOOK III

MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE WEST 283

BOOK IV

ST. BENEDICT 387

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THIS WORK

Cæterum et mihi, vetustas res scribenti, nescio quo pacto, antiquus fit animus.—TITUS LIVIUS.

THIS work originated in a purpose more limited than its title implies. After having narrated, more than twenty years since, in the *Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth*, the life of a young woman in whom was epitomised the Catholic poetry of suffering and of love, and whose modest and forgotten existence belonged nevertheless to the most resplendent epoch of the middle ages, I had proposed to myself a task more difficult: I desired, in writing the life of a great monk, to contribute to the vindication of the monastic orders. Happy to have been able to attract some attention to an aspect of religious history too long obscured and forgotten, by justifying the action of Catholicism upon the most tender and exalted sentiments of the human heart, I hoped, by a sketch of another kind, to secure the same suffrages in vindicating Catholic and historic truth upon the ground where it has been most misconstrued, and where it still encounters the greatest antipathies and prejudices.

The name of St. Bernard immediately recurs to any inquirer who seeks the most accomplished type of the Religious. No other man has shed so much glory over the frock of the monk. Yet, notwithstanding, strange to tell! none of the

numerous authors who have written his history, excepting his first biographers, who commenced their work during his life, seem to have understood the fact which both governed and explained his career—his monastic profession. By consent of all, St. Bernard was a great man and a man of genius; he exercised upon his age an ascendancy without parallel; he reigned by eloquence, virtue, and courage. More than once he decided the fate of nations and of crowns —at one time, even, he held in his hands the destiny of the Church. He was able to influence Europe, and to precipitate her upon the East; he was able to combat and overcome, in Abailard, the precursor of modern rationalism. All the world knows and says as much—by consent of all he takes rank by the side of Ximenes, of Richelieu, and of Bossuet. But that is not enough. If he was—and who can doubt it?—a great orator, a great writer, and a great man; he neither knew it nor cared for it. He was, and above all wished to be, something entirely different: he was a monk and a saint; he lived in a cloister and worked miracles.

The Church has established and defined the sanctity of Bernard—but history remains charged with the mission of recounting his life, and of explaining the marvellous influence which he exercised upon his contemporaries.

But in proceeding to study the life of this great man, who was a monk, we find that the popes, the bishops, and the saints, who were then the honour and bulwark of Christian society, came, like him, all, or nearly all, from the monastic order. What were they, then, these monks? —from whence came they?—and what had they done till then to occupy so high a place in the destinies of the world? It is necessary, first of all, to resolve these questions.

And there is more. In attempting to judge the age in which St. Bernard lived, we perceive that it is impossible either to explain or to comprehend it without recognising it as animated by the same breath which had vivified an

anterior epoch, of which this was but the direct and faithful continuation.

If the twelfth century did homage to the genius and the virtue of the monk Bernard, it is because the eleventh century had been regenerated and penetrated by the virtue and the genius of the monk who was called Gregory VII. Neither the epoch nor the work of Bernard should be looked at apart from the salutary crisis which had prepared the one and made the other possible: a simple monk could never have been heard and obeyed as Bernard was, if his undisputed greatness had not been preceded by the contests, the trials, and the posthumous victory of that other monk who died six years before his birth. It is, then, necessary not only to characterise by a conscientious examination the pontificate of the greatest of those popes who have proceeded from the monastic class, but also to pass in review the whole period which connected the last struggles of Gregory with the first efforts of Bernard, and to thus attempt the recital of the gravest and most glorious strife in which the Church ever was engaged, and in which the monks stood foremost in suffering as in honour.

But even that is not enough. Far from being the founders of the monastic order, Gregory VII. and Bernard were but produced by it, like thousands more of their contemporaries. That institution had existed more than five centuries when these great men learnt how to draw from it so marvellous a strength. To know its origin, to appreciate its nature and its services, it is necessary to go back to another Gregory—to St. Gregory the Great, to the first pope who came from the cloister; and further still, to St. Benedict, legislator and patriarch of the monks of the West. It is necessary at least to glance at the superhuman efforts made during these five centuries by legions of monks, perpetually renewed, to subdue, to pacify, to discipline, and to purify the savage nations amongst whom they laboured, and of whom twenty barbarous tribes were successively trans-

formed into Christian nations. It would be cruel injustice and ingratitude to pass by in silence twenty generations of indomitable labourers, who had cleared the thorns from the souls of our fathers, as they cleared the soil of Christian Europe, and had left only the labour of the reaper to Bernard and his contemporaries.

The volumes of which I now begin the publication are destined to this preliminary task.

Ambitious of carrying my readers with me on the way which I have opened to myself, my intention by this long preamble has been to show what the Monastic Order was, and what it had done for the Catholic world, before the advent of St. Bernard to the first place in the esteem and admiration of Christendom in his time. In a literary point of view, I know, it is unwise to diffuse thus over a long series of years, and a multitude of names for the most part forgotten, the interest which it would be so easy to concentrate upon one luminous point, upon one superior genius. It is an enterprise of which I perceive the danger. Besides, in showing thus so many great men and great works before coming to him who ought to be the hero of my book, I am aware that I enfeeble the effect of his individual grandeur, the merit of his devotion, the animation of the tale. I should take care to avoid this peril if I wrote only for success. But there is to every Christian a beauty superior to art—the beauty of truth. There is something which concerns us more closely than the glory of all the heroes and even of all the saints—and that is, the honour of the Church, and her providential progress through the midst of the storms and darkness of history. I was loth to sacrifice the honour of an august institution, too long calumniated and proscribed, to the honour of a single man. Had I even been thus tempted, that hero himself, Bernard, the great apostle of justice and of truth, would have resented my so doing—he would not pardon me for exalting himself at the expense of his predecessors and his masters.

The subject, thus developed, embraces but too vast a field—it belongs at once to the present and to the past. The links which attach it to all our history are numerous and manifest. When we look at the map of ancient France, or of any one of our provinces, no matter which, we encounter at each step the names of abbeys, of chapter-houses, of convents, of priories, of hermitages, which mark the dwelling-place of so many monastic colonies. Where is the town which has not been founded, or enriched, or protected by some religious community? Where is the church which owes not to them a patron, a relic, a pious and popular tradition? Wherever there is a luxuriant forest, a pure stream, a majestic hill, we may be sure that Religion has there left her stamp by the hand of the monk. That impression has also marked itself in universal and lasting lines upon the laws, the arts, the manners—upon the entire aspect of our ancient society. Christendom, in its youth, has been throughout vivified, directed, and constituted by the monastic spirit. Wherever we interrogate the monuments of the past, not only in France but in all Europe—in Spain as in Sweden, in Scotland as in Sicily—everywhere rises before us the memory of the monk,—the traces, ill-effaced, of his labours, of his power, of his benefactions, from the humble furrow which he has been the first to draw in the bogs of Brittany or of Ireland, up to the extinguished splendours of Marmoutier and Cluny, of Melrose and the Escurial.

And there is also a contemporary interest by the side of this interest of the past. Universally proscribed and dishonoured during the eighteenth century, in the nineteenth the religious orders everywhere reappear. Our age has witnessed, at the same time, their burial and their resurrection. *Here* we have succeeded in rooting out their last remnants, and *there* they have already renewed their life. Wherever the Catholic religion is not the object of open persecution, as in Sweden—wherever she has been able

to obtain her legitimate portion of modern liberty—they reappear as of themselves. We have despoiled and proscribed them—we see them everywhere return, sometimes under new names and appearances, but always with their ancient spirit. They neither reclaim nor regret their antique grandeur. They limit themselves to living—to preaching by word and by example—without wealth, without pomp, without legal rights, but not without force nor without trials —not without friends, nor, above all, without enemies.

Friends and enemies are alike interested to know from whence they come, and whence they have drawn the secret of a life so tenacious and so fruitful. I offer to the one as to the other a tale which shall not be a panegyric nor even an apology, but the sincere testimony of a friend, of an admirer, who desires to preserve the impartial equity which history demands, and who will conceal no stain that he may have the fuller right of veiling no glory.

CHAPTER II

FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER OF MONASTIC INSTITUTIONS

Quest' altri fuochi tutti contemplanti
Uomini furo, accesi di quel caldo
Che fa nascer i fiori e i frutti santi.
Qui è Macario, qui è Romoaldo:
Qui son li frati miei, che dentro a' chiostri
Fermaro i piedi, e tennero 'l cor saldo.

ST. BENEDICT *to* DANTE.
Paradiso, xxii.

BEFORE entering upon this history, it seems necessary to make some observations on the fundamental character of monastic self-devotion—upon that which has been the principle at once of the services it has rendered, and the hate which it has inspired.

Some years ago, who understood what a monk really was? For myself, I had no doubt on the subject when I commenced this work. I believed that I knew something which approached to the idea of a saint—to that of the Church; but I had not the least notion of what a monk might be, or of the monastic order. I was like my time. In all the course of my education, domestic or public, no one, not even among those who were specially charged to teach me religion and history, no one considered it necessary to give me the least conception of the religious orders. Thirty years had scarcely passed since their ruin; and already they were treated as a lost species, of whom fossil bones reappeared from time to time, exciting curiosity or repugnance, but who had no longer a place in history among the living. I imagine that most men of my own age regarded them thus. Have not we all come forth from college know-

ing by heart the list of the mistresses of Jupiter, but ignorant even of the names of the founders of those religious orders which have civilised Europe, and so often saved the Church?

The first time that I saw the dress of a monk—must I confess it?—was on the boards of a theatre, in one of those ignoble parodies which hold, too often among modern nations, the place of the pomps and solemnities of religion. Some years later I encountered, for the first time, a real monk; it was at the foot of the Grande Chartreuse, at the entrance of that wild gorge, on the brink of that bounding torrent, which no one can ever forget who has once visited that celebrated solitude. I knew nothing then of the services or of the glories which that despised cowl ought to have recalled to the least instructed Christian; but I remember still the surprise and emotion into which that image of a vanished world threw my heart. To-day, even, after so many other emotions, so many different contests, so many labours which have revealed to me the immortal grandeur of the part taken by the religious orders in the Church, this recollection survives, and steals over me with infinite sweetness. How much I wish that this book may leave a similar impression upon those who encounter it on their way, and inspire some not only with respect for that vanquished grandeur, but with the desire to study it, and the duty of rendering to it justice!

We may, besides, without excess of ambition, claim for the monk a justice more complete than that which he has yet obtained, even from the greater number of the Christian apologists of recent times. In taking up the defence of the religious orders, these writers have seemed to demand grace for those august institutions in the name of the services which they have rendered to the sciences, to letters, and to agriculture. This is to boast the incidental at the expense of the essential. We are doubtless obliged to acknowledge and admire the cultivation of so many forests and deserts,

the transcription and preservation of so many literary and historical monuments, and that monastic erudition which we know nothing to replace; these are great services rendered to humanity, which ought, if humanity were just, to shelter the monks under a celestial shield. But there is, besides, something far more worthy of admiration and gratitude—the permanent strife of moral freedom against the bondage of the flesh; the constant effort of a consecrated will in the pursuit and conquest of Christian virtue; the victorious flight of the soul into those supreme regions where she finds again her true, her immortal grandeur. Institutions simply human, powers merely temporal, might perhaps confer upon society the same temporal benefits: that which human powers cannot do, that which they have never undertaken, and in which they never could succeed, is to discipline the soul, to transform it by chastity, by obedience, by sacrifice and humility; to recreate the man wasted by sin into such virtue, that the prodigies of evangelical perfection have become, during long centuries, the daily history of the Church. It is in this that we see the design of the monks, and what they have done. Among so many founders and legislators of the religious life, not one has dreamt of assigning the cultivation of the soil, the copying of manuscripts, the progress of arts and letters, the preservation of historical monuments, as a special aim to his disciples. These offices have been only accessory—the consequence, often indirect and involuntary, of an institution which had in view nothing but the education of the human soul, its conformity to the law of Christ, and the expiation of its native guilt by a life of sacrifice and mortification. This was for all of them the end and the beginning, the supreme object of existence, the unique ambition, the sole merit, and the sovereign victory.

For those who do not acknowledge the original fall, and the double necessity of human effort and divine grace to elevate us above the condition of fallen nature, it is clear that the monastic life can be nothing but a grand and

lamentable aberration. For those who neither know nor comprehend the struggles of the soul which seeks, in the love of God elevated to heroism, a victorious weapon and sovereign remedy against the inordinate love of the creature, that mysterious worship of chastity, which is the essential condition of the life of the cloister, must always remain unintelligible. But, to such minds, the Christian revelation and the priesthood instituted by Jesus Christ are equally inadmissible. On the other side, every man who believes in the incarnation of the Son of God and the divinity of the Gospel, ought to recognise in monastic life the most noble effort which has ever been made to overcome corrupted nature, and to approach to Christian perfection. Every Christian who believes in the perpetuity of the Church ought to discern and venerate in this institution, let its scandals and abuses be what they will, the imperishable seed of ecclesiastical self-devotion.

Thus is explained, on one side, the immense importance of the services which the regular clergy have rendered to religion, and, on the other, the special and constant animosity which the enemies of the Church have always displayed against them. We have but to open the history of Catholic nations, to be impressed by the presence of this double spectacle. Since the end of the Roman persecution, the grandeur, the liberty, and the prosperity of the Church have always been exactly proportioned to the power, the regularity, and the sanctity of the religious orders which she embraces within her bosom.[1] We can

[1] The religious orders may generally be classed in four great categories: 1st, The *Monks* properly so called, which comprehend the orders of St. Basil and St. Benedict, with all their branches, Cluny, the Camaldules, the Chartreux, the Cistercians, the Celestines, Fontevrault, Grandmont,—all anterior to the thirteenth century; 2d, The *Regular Canons*, who follow the rule of St. Augustine, and who have neither gained great distinction nor rendered eminent services, but to whom are attached two illustrious orders, that of Prémontré, and that of La Merci, for the redemption of captives; 3d, The *Brothers*, or religious mendicants (Frati)

affirm it without fear. Everywhere and always she has flourished most when her religious communities have been most numerous, most fervent, and most free.

To the period immediately following the peace of the Church, the monks of the Thebaide and of Palestine, of Lerins and of Marmoutier, secured innumerable champions of orthodoxy against the tyrannous Arians of the Lower Empire. In proportion as the Franks achieved the conquest of Gaul, and became the preponderating race amongst all the Germanic races, they permitted themselves to be influenced, converted, and directed by the sons of St. Benedict and of St. Columba.

From the seventh to the ninth century, it was the Benedictines who gave to the Church, Belgium, England, Germany, and Scandinavia, and who furnished, to the founders of all the kingdoms of the West, auxiliaries indispensable to the establishment of a Christian civilisation.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the same Benedictines, concentrated under the strong direction of the order of Cluny, contended victoriously against the dangers and abuses of the feudal system, and gave to St. Gregory VII. the army which he needed to save the independence of the Church, to destroy the concubinage of the priests, simony, and the secular occupation of ecclesiastical benefices.

In the twelfth century, the order of Citeaux, crowned by St. Bernard with unrivalled splendour, became the principal instrument of the beneficent supremacy of the Holy See, served as an asylum to St. Thomas of Canterbury, and as

which comprehend the Dominicans, the Franciscans (with all their subdivisions, Conventuals, Observantins, Récollets, Capucins), the Carmelites, the Augustines, the Servites, the Minimes, and, generally, all the orders created from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries; 4th and lastly, The *Regular Clerks*, a form affected exclusively by the orders created since the sixteenth century, those of the Jesuits, the Théatins, the Barnabites, &c. The Lazarists, the Oratorians, the Eudistes, are only, like the Sulpiciens, secular priests united in a congregation.

a bulwark to the liberty of the Church, till the time of Boniface VIII.[1]

In the thirteenth and fourteenth, the new orders instituted by St. Francis, St. Dominic, and their emulators, maintained and propagated the faith among the souls of men and the social institutions throughout the empire; renewed the contest against the venom of heresy, and against the corruption of morals; substituted for the crusades the work of redeeming Christian captives; and produced, in St. Thomas Aquinas, the prince of Christian doctors and moralists, whom faith consults as the most faithful interpreter of Catholic tradition, and in whom reason recognises the glorious rival of Aristotle and Descartes.

In the fifteenth century, the Church underwent the great schism, and all the scandals which resulted from it. The ancient orders, also, had lost their primitive fervour, and no new institution came to renew the vigour of the Christian blood.

And we know what was, in the sixteenth century, the invincible progress of Reform, until the day when the Jesuits, solemnly approved by the last General Council, came forward to intercept the torrent, and preserve to the Church at least the half of her inheritance.

In the seventeenth century, the splendours of Catholic eloquence and science are contemporary with the great reforms of St. Maur and of La Trappe, with the foundations of St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul, and with the marvellous blossoming of Christian charity in all these congregations of women, most part of which survive for our happiness.

Finally, in the eighteenth century, the religious orders,

[1] It is told that this Pope gave to the Abbot of Citeaux the privilege reserved to the popes, of having a seal where that prelate was represented sitting—saying to him, *Quoniam tu mecum solus stetisti, solus mecum sedebis.*

absorbed definitively by the *Commende*, infected by the corruptions which were engendered by the encroachments of the temporal power, or decimated by persecution, succumbed almost entirely; but at the same time the Church sustained the most humiliating trials, and the world has never been able to believe her nearer to her fall.

Where can we find in history a lesson more conclusive and incontestable than this perpetual coincidence? And can we not draw the same inference from the war, more or less flagrant, which all the centuries have waged against the Church? Is it not the monks whom the enemies and oppressors of the Church have always most detested and most pursued? Without denying their too real errors, or the fatal pretexts furnished by abuses too long unpunished, ought we not to confess that wherever it has been resolved to strike at the heart of religion, it has always been the religious orders who have received the first blows? The attempts against the authority of the Roman See, against the independence of the episcopate, against the constitution and property of the secular clergy, have they not been always and everywhere preceded by the suppression and spoliation of the regular communities? Have not Henry VIII. and the first Reformers been servilely imitated in these tactics by Joseph II. and the French Revolution? And if we had leisure or courage to throw here a rapid glance over the history of the nineteenth century, should we not see the adversaries of Catholicism everywhere adjured to extirpate the last remnants of monastic institutions, and to smother the germs of that reviving life of the cloister which is always to be found accompanying the revival of the faith and usages of Christianity itself?

God forbid that we should desire to deduce from these marvellous coincidences an absolute identity between the Church and the religious orders! We would not confound institutions holy and salutary, but subject to all human infirmities, with the sole institution founded by God and

for eternity. We do not deny that the Church may subsist and triumph without them. But up to the present time it has pleased God to establish a glorious conjunction between the prosperity of the Church and that of the religious orders —between their liberty and hers. During ten centuries these orders have been the surest bulwark of the Church, and have supplied her most illustrious pontiffs. During ten centuries the secular clergy, naturally too much exposed to the influence of the world, have almost always been surpassed in devotion, in sanctity, and in courage, by the regulars, withdrawn within their monasteries as within citadels, where they have regained peace and strength in re-baptizing themselves in austerity, discipline, and silence. During ten centuries the Religious have been, as they still are in our own day, the most intrepid missionaries, the most indefatigable propagators of the Gospel. And, in brief, during ten centuries, the religious orders have endowed the Church at the same time with an army active and permanent and with a trustworthy reserve. Like the different forces of the same army, they have displayed, even in the diversity of their rules and tendencies, that variety in unity which constitutes the fruitful loveliness and sovereign majesty of Catholicism; and, beyond this, have practised, as far as consists with human weakness, those evangelical precepts, the accomplishment of which conducts to Christian perfection. Occupied, above all, in opening to themselves the way to heaven, they have given to the world the grandest and most noble of lessons, in demonstrating how high a man can attain upon the wings of love purified by sacrifice, and of enthusiasm regulated by faith.

CHAPTER III

OF THE TRUE NATURE OF THE MONASTIC VOCATION

Confortare, et esto vir,
3 *Reg.* ii. 2.

. . . Se 'l mondo sapesse 'l cuor ch' egli ebbe. . . .
Assai lo loda, e più lo loderebbe.
DANTE, *Parad.*, c. 6.

BUT scarcely has our first glance discerned the prodigious influence exercised by the religious orders upon Christian society, when we are led to inquire from whence has come that great body of men, who during so many ages have peopled the monasteries, and recruited the permanent army of prayer and charity?

In the depths of human nature there exists without doubt a tendency, instinctive, though confused and evanescent, towards retirement and solitude. Its manifestations are found in all the epochs of history, in all religions, in all societies, except perhaps among savage tribes, or in the bosom of that corrupt civilisation, which by its excess and over-refinement too often leads humanity back to a savage condition. What man, unless completely depraved by vice, or weighed down by age and cupidity, has not experienced, once at least, before his death, the attraction of solitude? Who has not felt the ardent desire for a repose lasting and regular, in which wisdom and virtue might furnish a perpetual aliment to the life of the heart and spirit, to science and to love? Where is the Christian soul, however enchained it may be by the bonds of sin, however soiled it may have been by contact with terrestrial baseness, who has not sometimes sighed after the charm and repose of the

religious life, and inhaled from afar the perfume which is exhaled from some one of those sweet and secret asylums [1] inhabited by virtue and devotion, and consecrated to meditations on eternity? Who has not dreamt of a future, in which, for one day at least, he might say of himself with the prophet, "*Sedebit solitarius et tacebit?*" Who has not comprehended that it is necessary to reserve at least some corners of the world, beyond reach of the revolutions, the agitations, and the covetings of ordinary life, that there the harmonies of human adoration and gratitude may be added to all the voices of nature, to those choirs of creation which bless and adore the Creator of all?

But in order that this inclination towards solitude should not degenerate into infirmity of spirit, and weak desertion of the duties and trials of life, Religion, with all that is purest and strongest in her, must come to justify and to regulate it. "I approve," says an illustrious French bishop in the twelfth century,—"I approve the life of those men for whom a city is but a prison, who find their paradise in solitude, who live there by the labour of their hands, or who seek to renew their souls by the sweetness of a life of contemplation—men who drink, with the lips of their hearts, at the fountain of life, and forget all that is behind them in gazing at that which is before; but neither the profoundest forests nor the highest mountains can give happiness to a man, if he has not in himself the solitude of the soul, the peace of conscience, the elevation of heart, *ascensiones in corde;* otherwise there is no solitude which does not produce idleness, curiosity, and vainglory, with storms of the most perilous temptations." [2]

[1] "Habent montes castelli secreta suavia, ut velut anachoretæ, præstante Domino, feliciter esse possitis."—CASSIODOR., *Divin. Litter.*, c. 29.

[2] "Anachoretarum vitam non improbo, . . . quibus est solitudo paradisus et civitas carcer. . . . Non beatum faciunt hominem secreta sylvarum, cacumina montium, si secum non habet solitudinem mentis, sabbatum cordis, tranquillitatem conscientiæ, ascensiones in corde, sine quibus omnem solitudinem comitantur mentis acedia, curiositas, vana gloria,

Thus, for the monks, a life of solitude was neither a weakness nor a caprice; it was an institution in which they found, as was demonstrated even by the language which they spoke, order and rule.

It was not, then, save in the exceptions inseparable from all general phenomena, an unreflecting instinct, an emotion evanescent or superficial, which enrolled so many Christians, in the bloom of youth, under the severe discipline of the cloister. On the contrary, when we search in the monuments of history for the natural interpretation and human origin of monastic vocations, we perceive that they were born, above all, of a conviction, often precocious, but always profound and reasonable, of the vanity of human things, and of the constant defeat of virtue and truth upon earth.

The triumph of evil here below, under its most repugnant form—that of falsehood and deceit—is specially impressed upon us by the history of the human race, as well as by the history of the most obscure individual life. We all receive that cruel and bitter lesson. We have all before us that poignant experience. But it comes to us tardily, and, if I dare to say so, from below. It proceeds out of the disappointments and fatigues of a life in which evil too often disputes the feeble desires of good. It comes at an age when, already enervated by our faults, depressed by our disappointments, and stained by our falls, we are no longer capable of changing our life, of coming to a generous resolution, and of throwing off the yoke.

But on the contrary, for those monks of old who filled the Christian world with their works and their name, that conviction came from above, solely by the revelations of faith, and by the contemplation of God's eternal justice. It seized upon them in the dawn of their existence, at that

periculosæ tentationum procellæ."—*Yves de Chartres*, ep. 192. See also his fine Epist. 256 upon the advantages of the cenobitical life compared with that of the anchorites.

decisive moment when the freedom of soul which age fetters and annuls existed in all its fulness—at that moment when every noble soul aspires to all that is great, beautiful, and strong, and feels itself capable of all efforts, all courage, all devotion, all generous impulses. From the bosom of that fugitive youth, and with that vigour, that moral elasticity, which so often vanishes before we are even entirely conscious of its possession, they took their flight towards a region where virtue and truth are inaccessible to humiliation.

Resolute to escape, as much as was in nature, from the empire of falsehood and wickedness, from the instability of human things and the lamentable weakness of old age, these young athletes sought to put their life in harmony with their convictions; and, by the warm and pure inspiration of their free will, they consecrated to the service of their neighbour, to the love of God, to the profit of the soul, a virgin energy of which nothing had yet tarnished the purity or enfeebled the force.

One of the most singular of the errors which many apologists of the monastic life have fallen into, has been to regard it as a refuge for sorrowful souls, fatigued and discontented with their lot in the world, unable to hold the place from which society has banished them, consumed by disappointment, or broken by melancholy. "If there are refuges for the health of the body," says M. de Chateaubriand, "ah! permit religion to have such also for the health of the soul, which is still more subject to sickness, and the infirmities of which are so much more sad, so much more tedious and difficult to cure!" The idea is poetical and touching, but it is not true. Monasteries were never intended to collect the invalids of the world. It was not the sick souls, but, on the contrary, the most vigorous and healthful which the human race has ever produced, who presented themselves in crowds to fill them. The religious life, far from being the refuge of the feeble, was, on the contrary, the arena of the strong.

Sometimes, it is true, by one of those marvellous contrasts which abound in the works inspired by religion, that career full of supernatural combats and triumphs, that life in which virtue and Christian strength attain their apotheosis, was precisely that in which some souls naturally infirm, and hearts wounded in the combats of worldly life, found for themselves a refuge. And as modern civilisation, by the side of its incontestable benefits, has too often the drawback of augmenting the number and the intensity of the maladies of the soul, it cannot be without interest, from a point of view purely social, to preserve for such a shelter, and to secure for them due treatment. It is very possible that, even on this account, the ruin of the religious orders has been a public calamity, and has not been without some influence upon that frightful increase in the number of suicides which is certified each year by the criminal statistics.[1]

But, to tell the truth, it is only in romance that we find disappointments, grief, and melancholy conducting to the cloister. I have found no serious or important trace of it in history, not even in the traditions of the degenerated communities of modern times, and much less in the heroic ages of their chronicles. Without doubt, some have been thrown into the cloister by great unhappiness, by irretrievable misfortune, by the loss of some one passionately loved; and I could cite some curious and touching examples of such. But they are exceedingly rare. To present us with a general theory of the religious life as an asylum for feeble-

[1] "The number of suicides has not ceased to increase each year since the criminal statistics included them."—*Report of M. Odillon Barrot, Keeper of the Seals, to the President of the Republic*, 29th September 1849. This number was in 1826, 1739; in 1846, 3102; in 1852, 3674. It increased in 1856 to 4189. In the space of twenty-seven years, from 1826 to 1853, 71,418 persons have in France voluntarily met their death. In England, despite the prejudice to the contrary, the number is not so great—from 1852 to 1856 it is ascertained that in the United Kingdom, amongst 24 millions of inhabitants, there were but 5415 suicides, which makes only 1100 per annum.

ness and sadness, as a place of refuge for that melancholy which was distinctly proscribed and expelled from the life of the cloister as a vice, under the name of *acedia*, is to go in the face both of facts and reason.

The distinctive characteristic which shines from all the series of great monastic creations and existences, and which I desire to exhibit before my readers, is strength: not that strength which man has in common with animals; not that material strength which demoralises the world with its contemptible triumphs; not that external strength, the dangerous help of which is invoked too often by blind and cowardly Christians; not that strength which consists in imposing on others one's own convictions or interests: but that which signifies the discipline of self, the power of ruling, of restraining, of subduing rebellious nature—that strength which is a cardinal virtue, and which overcomes the world by courage and sacrifice. I do not hesitate to affirm that the monks, the true monks of the great ages of the Church, are the representatives of manhood under its most pure and most energetic form—of manhood intellectual and moral—of manhood, in some manner condensed by celibacy, protesting against all vulgarity[1] and baseness, condemning itself to efforts more great, sustained, and profound than are exacted by any worldly career, and by this means making of earth only a stepping-stone to heaven, and of life but a long series of victories.

Yes! thanks to the robust constitution which they have received from their founders—thanks to that incomparable discipline of soul which all the monastic legislators have succeeded in establishing—the monk draws from his solitude the treasure of a strength which the world has never

[1] "It is certain that in losing the institutions of monastic life, the human mind has lost a great school of originality. Now, all that contributes to maintain in humanity a tradition of moral nobleness is worthy of respect, and, in one sense, of regret, even when that result has been obtained through many abuses and prejudices."—ERNEST RENAN, *Journal des Débats* of the 16th January 1855.

surpassed, nor, indeed, equalled. "Solitude," says a venerable ecclesiastic of our day, "solitude is the mother-country of the strong—silence is their prayer."[1] The entire monastic history is but a demonstration of this truth. And how could it have been otherwise? What was this life, if not a permanent protest against human weakness—a reaction renewed every day against all that degrades and enervates man—a perpetual aspiration towards all that soars above this terrestrial life and fallen nature? In all monasteries, faithful to their primitive constitution, that scorn of life which is the secret of heroism, was taught and practised at every moment of the day. The soul, elevated to God even by the least important practices of its daily rule, offered to Him without ceasing that triumph which the purest forces and most generous instincts of human nature gained over the senses and the passions.

It results from this, that the monastic life has always been compared to a warfare. "Come and see," said St. John Chrysostom, "come and see the tents of the soldiers of Christ, come and see their order of battle; they fight every day, and every day they defeat and immolate the passions which assail us."[2] *Milites Christi* they had been previously designated by St. Augustine[3] and Cassiodorus.[4] The term of *miles*, which had been originally borne by the armed citizens of the Roman republic, signified, at a later period, nothing more than mercenaries of the imperial armies; but when, later, and in proportion as the noble and free institutions of the Germanic races developed themselves, the word *miles* once more changed its acceptation and served to distinguish the chevalier of feudal times, that new analogy was adopted by the unanimous voice of the new nations. Charlemagne entitled the abbots of his empire *Chevaliers de*

[1] Le P. de Ravignam, *De l'Institut des Jésuites*, p. 31.
[2] S. Joan. Chrysost., *Homil. in Matth.*, 69-70, p. 771-779, ed. Gaume.
[3] Ed. Gaume, t. ii. 1237, and viii. 336.
[4] *De Divin. Instit.*, c. 30.

l'Eglise,[1] and all the biographers, all the historians, all the writers who have issued from the cloister, continue to recognise in the monastic order the *Chevalerie de Dieu*. That comparison between the two knighthoods, lay and monastic, is, we can affirm, the everyday language of the history of the religious orders, and of the biography of those saints who have founded and illustrated them. St. Anselm and St. Bernard employ it in almost every page of their writings. A century later, St. Francis of Assisi understood his mission in no other fashion. He said, in speaking of his chosen disciples, "These are my paladins of the Round Table." In the dreams of his youth, this son of a wool-merchant had seen the shop of his father full of bucklers, of lances, of military harness—a prophetic vision of the war which he should wage with the enemy of the human race; and in the decline of his life, the stigmata of the Passion, the marks of which he received, seemed to the eyes of his contemporaries the badge and emblazonry of Christ, whose invincible and valiant knight he was.[2]

And as the sacrifice of self is the principle of military courage, and the cause of that *prestige* which attaches itself to military glory above all other human renown, so, in the spiritual order, the daily sacrifice of self by monastic obedience explains and justifies the supreme regard which the Church has always accorded to the Monk. Thus also is explained the necessity of minute and continual subjection

[1] "Optamus enim vos, sicut decet *Ecclesiæ milites*, et interius devotos et exterius doctos esse."

[2] "Nocte quadam . . . videbatur ei domum suam totam habere plenam . . . sellis, clypeis, lanceis, et ceteris apparatibus. . . . Non consueverat talia in domo sua videre, sed potius pannorum cumulos ad vendendum. . . . Responsum est ei omnia hæc arma sua fore militumque suorum. . . . Opportune multum arma traduntur contra Fortem armatum militi pugnaturo."—THOMAS DE CELANO, *Vita prima*, ap BOLLAND, t. 11th Oct., p. 685. "Eia nunc, strenuissime miles, ipsius fer arma invictissimi ducis. . . . Fer vexillum. . . . Fer sigillum. . . . Dux in militia Christi futurus, armis deberes cœlestibus signoque crucis insignibus decorari."—S. BONAVENT., *Vit. altera*, ibid., p. 779.

in all monastic government, just as we meet in every army with rules of discipline sometimes puerile and vexatious in appearance, but the least infraction of which, in time of war, is punished with death.

The chivalrous courage which they displayed every day against sin and their own weakness, still animated them when they encountered princes and potentates who abused their authority. It is in this above all that we discover that moral energy which gives to man both the will and the might to resist injustice and to protest against the abuses of power, even when these abuses and iniquities do not fall directly upon himself. That energy, without which all the guarantees of order, of security, and of independence invented in politics are illusory, was inherent in the character and profession of the monks. From the earliest times of their history, and in the midst of the abject baseness of the Byzantine Court, they were remarked as the men who of all others spoke with the greatest freedom to kings.[1] From century to century, and so long as they remained free from the corruptions of temporal power, they pursued this glorious privilege. We shall see it on every page of this narrative; we shall see the monks armed with an intrepid freedom, a courage indomitable against oppression; and we shall comprehend what succour the innocent and unfortunate could derive from them, in those times when no one thought himself defenceless so long as he could invoke against his oppressor the curse of God and of the cowled heads.[2] At the distance of a thousand years we find the same calm and indomitable courage in the reprimand which St. Benedict addressed to King Totila,[3] and in the answer of the obscure prior of Solesmes to the Lord of Sablé, against whom he

[1] "Hoc enim maxime genus hominum summa cum libertate regibus collocuti sunt." Thus Montfaucon translates the passage from St. John Chrysostom, *Adv. Oppugn. Vit. Mon.*, p. 85, ed. Gaume.

[2] Cucullati. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* ed. Gibson.

[3] S. GREGORII MAGNI, *Vit. S. Patr. Bened.*, c. 15.

found it necessary to maintain the privileges of his priory. This nobleman, having met him one day upon the bridge of the town, said to him, "Monk, if I did not fear God, I would throw thee into the Sarthe!" "Monseigneur," answered the monk, "if you fear God, I have nothing to fear." [1]

It was thus under the dictation of the monks that those civil and political guarantees were written, which the Christian rebels against the abuses of power wrested from their unjust masters. It was to the care of the monks that they confided these charters of liberty, in which the conditions of their obedience were inscribed.[2] It was in the cloister of the monks that they sought a sepulchre not only for the kings, the great men, and the conquerors, but also for the feeble and the vanquished. There the victims of tyranny, of injustice, of all the excesses of human power, found a last asylum.[3] There slept in peace, in the midst of perpetual prayer, the exile, the outlawed, the doomed.[4] These admirable verses of Statius upon the temple of Clemency, at Athens, which the monks have preserved to us, found their realisation in the bosom of monastic life—

> "Sic tutum sacrasse loco mortalibus ægris
> Confugium, unde procul starent iræque minæque
> Regnaque, et a justis Fortuna recederet aris. . . .
> Huc victi bellis, patriâque e sede fugati, . . .
> Conveniunt, pacemque rogant." [5]

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[1] *MS. de la Bibl. Royale*, cited in the *Essai Hist. sur l'Abbaye de Solesmes*, 1846, p. 46. The prior was named Jean Bougler; he was elected in 1515, and decorated his church with the remarkable sculptures which are still admired there.

[2] In testimony of this, to quote one example among a thousand, the Charter *de libertatibus comitatus Devoniæ* was preserved at Tavistock Abbey, DIGBY, x. 167.

[3] See in the *Formules Inédites de la Bibl. de Saint Gall*, published by M. de Rozière, how the abbots interceded with the nobles to obtain forgiveness for the serfs who had incurred the anger of their masters.

[4] See in INGULPH OF CROYLAND, the fine history of Earl Waltheof, victim of the Normans, of whom we shall speak further on.

[5] *Theb.* xii. v. 481.

No men have ever showed less terror of the strongest, less weak complaisance towards power, than the monks. Amidst the peace and obedience of the cloister they tempered their hearts every day, as indomitable champions of right and truth, for the war against injustice. Noble spirits, hearts truly independent, were to be found nowhere more frequently than under the cowl. Souls calm and brave, upright and lofty, as well as humble and fervent, were there and abounded—souls such as Pascal calls *perfectly heroic.*

"Freedom," says a holy monk of the eighth century, "is not given up because humility freely bows its head."[1] And at the height of the middle ages another monk, Pierre de Blois, wrote those proud words, which express at once the political code of that epoch and the history of the monastic order:—"There are two things for which all the faithful ought to resist to blood—justice and liberty."[2]

It is sufficient to say, that we find them little infected with that political servility which has so often and so lamentably disfigured the annals of the clergy, which began with Constantine, and which, sometimes forgotten or thrown off in those great emergencies, when human liberty and dignity have triumphantly displayed themselves, continually reappears, like an incurable leprosy, in those other periods, far more prolonged and frequent, of debasement and servitude. The saints themselves have not always been able to escape the contagion of that fatal delusion, which has induced too many pontiffs and doctors to seek the ideal of Christian society in a resurrection of the Roman empire transformed into a Catholic monarchy. The monks, more than any other portion of the Christian community, more than any other ecclesiastical corporation, have kept themselves free of it. Seldom, very seldom, do we find among

[1] "Nec ideo libertas succubuit, quia humilitas semetipsam libere prostravit."—AMBROSIUS AUTPERTUS, *Abb. S. Vincentii, ad Vulturn.*, ann. 768.

[2] "Duo sunt, justitia et libertas, pro quibus quisque fidelis usque ad sanguinem stare debeat."—PETR. BLESENS., *De Inst. Episcop.*

them the instruments or apostles of absolute power. When that anomaly presents itself, it disgusts us more here than elsewhere. I have noted some traces of that baseness, the contrast of which brings out all the clearer the masculine and noble independence which, in social and political matters, has always distinguished the monks of the ages of faith.

Mixing in the world, more perhaps than was expedient, and drawn, even by the trust and affection which they inspired, into the midst of interests and of conflicts to which they were strangers, they did not always issue out of these uninjured; but, on the other hand, they carried with them qualities of which the world stands always in great need, and for which it ought to have been more grateful. They did not believe that piety, orthodoxy, or even sanctity itself, could dispense with integrity and honour. When such a calamity befell,—when prelates or monks showed themselves indifferent or unfaithful to the duties of public life, to the obligations of uprightness, to the laws of humanity, of gratitude, or of friendship, their indignation was roused, and they did not fail to mark and stigmatise the culprits in their annals. We see that they invariably place the natural virtues, the services rendered to a country or to human society, side by side with those marvels of penitence and of the love of God which they have registered so carefully; and we love to follow through all ages the long succession of monks, as active as they were pious, as courageous as fervent, to whom we may justly apply that brief and noble eulogium pronounced by the Saxon Chronicle upon an abbot who distinguished himself during the convulsions of the Norman Conquest, "He was a good monk and a good man, loved of God and of good men."[1]

For myself, who for more than twenty years have lived in the good and great company of the monks of other times, I declare that it is there above all, and perhaps there only,

[1] "Fuit enim bonus monachus et bonus vir: proptereaque eum dilexerunt Deus et boni viri."—*Chron. Saxon.*, ad ann. 1137, p. 240, ed. Gibson.

that I have recognised the school of true courage, true freedom, and true dignity: when, after long intervals, and from the midst of the painful experiences of political life, I returned to the study of their acts and writings, I met there another race, of other hearts and heroisms. I owe to them, in a point of view merely human, my thanks for having reconciled me to men, by opening to me a world in which I hardly ever found either an egotist or a liar, an ungrateful or servile soul. There I have beheld, there I have tasted, that noble independence which belongs, by right of their humility itself, to humble and magnanimous souls. There I have learned to understand how, and by what means, great corporations and successive generations of good men have been able to live at an equal distance from the unrestrained licence and the abject servility which alternately characterise our modern society, in which individual man, conscious that he is nothing, that he has neither a root in the past nor an influence upon the future, prostrates himself entirely before the idol of the moment, reserving to himself only the right of demolishing, of betraying, and of forgetting it on the morrow.

And besides—why should not I acknowledge it?—even in the midst of this contemporary world, the downfalls and miseries of which have been to me so bitter, the Divine goodness brought me acquainted in my youth with the type of a monk of ancient times, in a man whose name and glory belong to our time and country.[1] Although he was not yet professed at the time when our souls and our lives drew close to each other, and although he has since entered an order apart from the monastic family of which I have become the historian, he revealed to me, better than all books, and more clearly than all my studies of the past, the great and noble qualities which go to the making of a true monk —self-abnegation, fortitude, devotion, disinterestedness, solid

[1] Father Lacordaire, the regenerator of the Dominican Order in France, and the most celebrated preacher of the day.

and fervent piety, and that true independence which does not exclude filial obedience. His eloquence has astonished a country and a time accustomed to the victories of eloquence; his noble genius has conquered the admiration of the most rebellious critics. But he will be honoured by God and by a Christian posterity, not so much as a writer and an orator, but as a monk, austere and sincere.

His name is not needed here—all who read will have defined it. All will pardon me for this impulse of a heart younger than its age, and for this homage to the community of contests, ideas, and belief, which has united us for thirty years, and which has lasted through differences of sentiment as well as diversity of career. Our union, born amid the charming dreams and confidence of youth, has survived the reverses, the betrayals, the inconstancy, and the cowardices which have overshadowed our mature age, and has helped me to overleap the abyss which separates the present from the past.

Such an example, in spite of all the differences of times and institutions, helps us also to comprehend the influence of the noble character and powerful associations with which the monastic order has so long enriched the Church and the world. For the reality of that influence is incontestable. We are obliged to acknowledge, under pain of denying the best ascertained facts of history, those succours which the most difficult virtues and the most generous instincts of man, even in temporal affairs, have drawn from the bosom of the cloister, when the whole of Europe was covered with these asylums, open to the best intellects and highest hearts.

None can deny the ascendancy which a solitude thus peopled exercised upon the age. None can deny that the world yielded the empire of virtue to those who intended to flee from the world, and that a simple monk might become, in the depths of his cell, like St. Jerome or St. Bernard, the centre of his epoch and the lever of its movements.

Let us then banish into the world of fiction that affirmation, so long repeated by foolish credulity, which made monasteries, and even religion itself, an asylum for indolence and incapacity, for misanthropy and pusillanimity, for feeble and melancholy temperaments, and for men who were no longer fit to serve society in the world. The very incomplete narrative which I shall place before my readers, will, I venture to believe, suffice to prove that there has never been in any society, or at any epoch, men more energetic, more active, or more practical, than the monks of the middle ages.

We shall see how these *idlers* were associated during ten centuries with all the greatest events of the Church and of the world—always the first in labour and in combat. We shall see them issuing from the cloister to occupy pulpits and professors' chairs, to direct councils and conclaves, parliaments and crusades; and returning thither to raise monuments of art and science, to erect churches and produce books, which astonish and defy modern pride. We shall see that these dreamers were, above all, men in every meaning of the word, *viri*—men of heart and of will, with whom the most tender charity, and humility the most fervent, excluded neither perseverance, nor decision, nor boldness. They were masters of their will. Throughout the whole duration of the Christian ages, the cloister was the permanent nursery of great souls—that is to say, of that in which modern civilisation most fails. And for that reason we repeat it without ceasing: The most brilliant and enduring glory of the monastic institution was the vigorous temper which it gave to Christian souls—the fertile and generous discipline which it imposed upon thousands of heroic hearts.

CHAPTER IV

SERVICES RENDERED TO CHRISTIANITY BY THE MONKS

Sine fictione didici, et sine invidia communico, et honestatem (illorum) non abscondo.—SAP. vii. 13.

THERE are some services and triumphs of a deep and silent kind which acquire their due honour only from posterity, and under the survey of history. Such are those which we have just described. But there are others more visible and more palpable, which seize at once upon the admiration and gratitude of contemporaries. When we inquire into the causes which have given to the religious orders, from their origin, and as long as their fervent spirit lasted, a part so important in the destinies of the Church, and so high a place in the heart of all the Christian populations, it seems easy to recognise them in the two great functions common to all the orders and to all their branches—Prayer and Alms.

The first of all the services which the monks have conferred upon Christian society was that of praying—of praying much, of praying always for those whose prayers were evil or who prayed not at all. Christianity honoured and esteemed in them, above all, that great force of intercession; these supplications, always active, always fervent; these torrents of prayers, poured forth unceasingly at the feet of God, who wills that we should supplicate Him. Thus they turned aside the wrath of God; they lightened the weight of the iniquities of the world; they re-established the equilibrium between the empire of heaven and the empire

of earth. To the eyes of our fathers, it was this equilibrium between prayer and action, between the suppliant voices of humanity, timorous or grateful, and the incessant din of its passions and labours, which maintained the world in its place. In the maintenance of this equilibrium lay the strength and life of the middle ages; and when it is disturbed, all is disturbed in the soul, as in the world.

We will not inquire to what extent this disturbance exists in our modern world. It would be too sad to enumerate all the points of the globe where prayer is extinct, and where God listens for, without hearing, the voice of man. We know only that the universal need of prayer, and that ardent trust in its efficacy which characterised the middle ages, and which their detractors instance as a mark of childish simplicity, had been bequeathed to them by two antiquities, from whom they accepted the inheritance. The wisest of men has said, "The prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds: and till it come nigh, he will not be comforted; and will not depart till the Most High shall behold to judge righteously, and execute judgment."[1] Homer, who was nearly contemporary with Solomon, brightened his mythology with a light almost divine, when he made Phœnix say to Achilles, in that famous address which survives in all memories, "Even the gods permit themselves to be persuaded. Every day men, after having offended them, succeed in appeasing them with vows, with offerings, with sacrifices, libations, and prayers. The Prayers are daughters of the great Jupiter. Tottering, and with a wrinkled brow, scarcely lifting their humble eyes, they hasten anxiously after the steps of Wrong. For Wrong is haughty and vigorous, and with a light step always precedes them. She hastens throughout the earth outraging men, but the humble Prayers follow her to heal the wounds which she has made. These daughters of Jupiter approach to him who respects

[1] "Oratio humiliantis se nubes penetrabit: et donec propinquet non consolabitur; et non discedet, donec Altissimus aspiciat."—*Ecclic.* xxxv. 17.

and listens to them. They bring aid to him, they hearken in their turn, and grant his requests. But if a man, deaf to their desires, repulses them, they fly towards their father, and implore of him that Wrong may attach herself to the steps of that man, and rigorously avenge them."[1]

I cannot imagine a finer subject than the history of prayer—that is to say, the history of that which the creature has said to her Creator; the tale which should instruct us when, and wherefore, and how she places herself to recount to God her miseries and joys, her fears and her desires. If it was given to a human pen to write it, that history should be the history of the monks. For no men have known, as they did, how to wield that weapon of prayer, so well defined by the most illustrious bishop of our days, who has lately showed us how "the great witness of our weakness becomes, in the poor and feeble breast, a power redoubtable and irresistible to heaven itself: *Omnipotentia supplex.*" "God," continues that eloquent prelate, "in throwing us into the depths of this valley of misery, has willed to bestow upon our feebleness, upon our crimes even, the potency of prayer against Himself and His justice. When a man makes up his mind to pray, and when he prays well, his weakness itself becomes a strength. Prayer equals and surpasses sometimes the power of God. It triumphs over His will, His wrath, even over His justice."[2]

The Gospel has assured us of nothing more certain than this omnipotence of prayer. "If ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."[3] "Jesus Christ," says

[1] *Iliad*, ix. 497–512.

[2] M. DUPANLOUP, Bishop of Orleans—*First Sermon upon Prayer*, *Lent*, 1858.

[3] Matth. xxi. 21, 22; Mark xi. 23. It is said elsewhere: "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him" (Ps. cxlv. 19). And again: "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). The *Fiat lux* is not more energetic.

Bossuet, "expressly uses comparisons so extraordinary to show that all is possible to him who prays." And he adds, "Behold here the prodigy of prodigies—man reclothed with the omnipotence of God!"[1]

Penetrated by this conviction, men of old neglected no means and no occasion of augmenting and maintaining the intensity of prayer in its highest form. Of old, as to-day, there were doubtless many Christians no better instructed how to pray than he who writes these lines. But all recognised the importance — the grandeur — the necessity of prayer. All admitted that the greatest blessing of Heaven to a nation, to a family, or to a soul, was to shed abroad upon it the spirit of prayer. All understood and all acknowledged that this flame of the heart should ascend to God by hands specially consecrated to that august mission. All passionately invoked that pledge of true fraternity. All thirsted for that alms; and, to obtain it, all turned towards the monks.

Thus, as long as the monks remained faithful to the spirit of their institution, their special mission, their first duty was to pray, not only for themselves, but for all. They have been the veteran and indefatigable champions of Christianity in the "holy and perpetual struggle of human prayer with the divine omnipotence."[2] Gathered together and constituted by rule for prayer in common, they were regarded with reason by the good sense of the Christian populations as a potency of intercession, instituted for the salvation of souls and of nations. Thanks to them, prayer existed in the character of an institution of permanent and public force, universally recognised and blessed by God and by man.

"Where goest thou?" said the Emperor Valens one day to a noble Persian, Aphraate, who had become a monk and missionary of the Nicean faith. "I go to pray for your

[1] *Meditations on the Gospel*, part i., 39th day; part ii., 21st day.
[2] M. DUPANLOUP, l. c.

empire," answered the monk.[1] In the midst of the pomps of the Byzantine Court, the most ancient and eloquent apologist of the order, St. John Chrysostom, declared in words which have not grown old, the sovereign efficacy of monastic prayer—"The beneficence of the monks is more than royal: the king, if he is good, can solace the hardships of the body; but the monk, by his prayers, frees souls from the tyranny of demons. A man who is struck by a spiritual affliction passes before a king as before a body without life, and flies to the dwelling of the monks, as a peasant terrified by the sight of a wolf, takes refuge near the huntsman armed with a sword. What the sword is to the huntsman, prayer is to the monk. . . . Nor is it we alone who seek that shelter in our necessities; kings themselves invoke them in their dangers,—all, like mendicants fleeing, as in time of famine, to the houses of the rich."[2]

The words of St. John Chrysostom became a historical truth when the Christian royalty had replaced, at the head of new nations, the dishonoured majesty of the Cæsars. During a thousand years, and among all the Catholic populations, we perceive what an enviable resource the princes find in the prayers of the monks, and how they glorify themselves by confidence in them. At the apotheosis of the feudal age, when the fleet of Philip Augustus, sailing towards the Holy Land, was assailed in the Sicilian seas by a horrible tempest, the king reanimated courage and confidence in the breasts of the sailors by reminding them what intercessors they had left upon the soil of their country. "It is midnight," he said to them; "it is the hour when the community of Clairvaux arise to sing matins. These holy monks never forget us—they are going to

[1] "Imperator ad illum: Dic, inquit, quo vadis? Pro tuo, inquit, regno precaturus."—THEODORETI, *Ecclesiast. Histor.*, lib. iv. c. 26, t. iii. p. 284, edit. Cantabr.

[2] S. JOAN. CHRYS., *Comparatio Regis et Monachi*, c. 4; *Homil. in Matth.*, 68–72, et in *B. Philogonium*, c. 3, ed. Gaume, i. 607.

appease Christ—they go to pray for us; and their prayers will deliver us out of peril."[1] A similar story is told of Charles V., a great emperor in spite of his errors, who, in the decline of the Catholic ages, fired by a last breath of that flame which had illuminated the Crusades, twice led his fleets and his armies against the infidels; first to victory, and afterwards to defeat, on those coasts of Africa where St. Louis died.

Like its chiefs, the entire mass of Christian society, during the whole period of the middle age, showed a profound confidence in the superior and invincible power of monastic prayer; and for this reason endowed with its best gifts those who interceded the best for it. All the generations repeated, one after the other, with an inexhaustible diversity in form, but with a steadfast unanimity in spirit, the formula used by St. Eloysius in 631, in his charter of donation to the monks of Solignac—"I, your supplicant, in sight of the mass of my sins, and in hope of being delivered from them by God, give to you a little thing for a great, earth in exchange for heaven, that which passes away for that which is eternal."[2]

Thus, in receiving perishable riches from the hand of the faithful, the monks appeared to all to return the price of them in the unmeasured and unparalleled beneficence of prayer. By their mouth the voice of the Church rose

[1] "Jam matutinas Claravallensis ad horas
Concio surrexit: jam sancta oracula sancti,
Nostri haud immemores, in Christi laude resolvunt;
Quorum pacificat nobis oratio Christum,
Quorum nos tanto prece liberat ecce periclo.
Vix bene finierat, et jam fragor omnis et æstus,
Ventorumque cadit rabies, pulsisque tenebris,
Splendiflua radiant et luna et sidera luce."
GUILLELM. BRETONIS, *Philippidos*, iv. 44.

[2] "Ego supplex vester, considerans molem peccatorum meorum, ut merear ab ipsis erui et a Domino sublevari, cedo vobis parva pro magnis, terrena pro cœlestibus, temporalia pro æternis."—Ap. MABIL., *Acta SS. O. B.*, t. ii. p. 1092.

without ceasing to heaven, drawing down the dew of divine benedictions. They inundated the whole soil of Christendom with a fertilising moisture, inexhaustible source of grace and consolation. If it is true, as human wisdom has said, that he who works prays, may we not also believe that he who prays works, and that such work is the most fruitful and the most meritorious of all? "To occupy one's self with God," said St. Bernard, "is not to be idle—it is the occupation of all occupations."[1] It is this, then, which has justified and glorified in the eyes of Christian people all the orders, and specially those whom the world has comprehended least—those whom it has blamed for idle contemplations and prolonged prayers. How can we forget that it is precisely those who have merited and obtained the first place in the esteem of the Church and the gratitude of Christians? Has not St. Augustine even said, "The less a monk labours in anything else but prayer, the more serviceable is he to men?"[2] To deny that, is it not to deny the Gospel? Did not God Himself judge that cause and determine that question, when He took the part of Mary against Martha?[3]

But have the monks confined themselves to this solitary class of benefits? Has prayer been the only proof of solicitude, of affection, of gratitude, which they believed themselves able to give to their brothers, to their benefactors, to all the Christian community? Did they practise the giving of alms only under this purely spiritual form? No; all history witnesses to the contrary. All her monuments prove that the religious orders have practised a charity, active and

[1] "Otiosum non est vacare Deo, sed negotium negotiorum omnium."

[2] "Monachi si non fidelium eleemosynis juventur, necesse est eos opere terreno, *quanto fidelium damno*, plus solito occupari."—S. AUGUSTIN., t. v., p. 3192, ed. Gaume.

[3] "Creator omnium Deus, per hoc quod Mariæ causam contra Martham assumpsit, evidentius patefecit."—EUGENII PAPÆ III., *Epist. ad Wibald. Corbeiens.*, in *Amplissima Collect.*, t. ii. p. 293.

palpable, such as had never been before them, and can never be exercised by other hands. They have displayed in that task all the intelligence and devotedness that is given to man. To that unfortunate multitude condemned to labour and privation, which constitutes the immense majority of the human race, the monks have always been prodigal, not only of bread, but at the same time of a sympathy efficacious and indefatigable—a nourishment of the soul not less important than that of the body.[1] What delicate cares, what tender foresight, what ingenious precautions, have been invented and practised during twelve centuries in these houses of prayer, which count among their dignitaries *les infirmiers des pauvres*, the nurses of the poor![2] After having given an incessant and generous hospitality to the indigent crowd whom they never found too numerous,[3] after having edified and rejoiced them by the sight of their own peaceful and gentle life, they offered to them, besides, in time of war, a shelter, an asylum almost always respected by Catholic conquerors. After having given all that they could give on their own account, they inspired to marvels of generosity all

[1] To quote only one example among a thousand, we see, in the fifth century, St. Lié, Abbot of Mantenay, in Champagne, working with his own hands in the vineyard of the convent, carrying with him bread to distribute to the poor; and, whilst they ate it, preaching to them the fear and the love of God.—DESGUERROIS, *Histoire du Diocèse du Troyes*, p. 110.

[2] *Infirmarii pauperum.* There were such at Clairvaux to whom Thiémar of Juvencourt bequeathed in 1244 twelve deniers of annual income, payable at Martinmas.—*Extracts MSS.* made by D. GUITTON *from the Archives of Clairvaux*, t. ii. fol. 79.

[3] They were no sooner escaped from proscription and ruin, than they resumed faithfully and universally the habits of their fathers. After the Cistercians or English Trappists of Melleray had been expelled from that abbey in 1831, some few from among them returned to England, and, favoured by the religious liberty which reigned there, and by the munificence of Mr. Ambrose Lisle Philips, they were able to settle in an uncultivated region called Charnwood Forest, in the centre of a province in which monks had not been seen for three centuries. In this new monastery they have so well followed the traditions of their fathers, that, from the 1st of January 1845 to the 21st of April of the same year, they have given alms and hospitality to 6327 of the poor—and lived themselves only on charity!

those who loved and surrounded them. Their aspect alone seems to have been a permanent sermon to the profit of charity. Their habitual familiarity with the great has always benefited the small. If they were richly endowed by rich Christians, they in their turn endowed the poor with this purified wealth, and became thus the intermediary agents, delicate and indefatigable, from whose hands the alms once bestowed by the rich descended in perpetuity upon the poor.[1]

They have nobly and faithfully fulfilled that mission; and everywhere, even in the depths of their modern decadence, that supreme virtue of charity has specially distinguished them. In recent ages, the spirit of the world had everywhere invaded them, but had never been able to extirpate from their hearts the pious prodigality of their ancestors. The world had never succeeded in closing that door, from which has flowed forth upon the surrounding population the inexhaustible current of their benefits, so well symbolised by that wicket of Clairvaux, which, in the time of the monks, was called *La Donne*,[2] and which we can still see standing,

[1] In March 1228 Elizabeth, lady of Chateauvillain, gave to the Cistercians of Clairvaux 620 livres de Provins in alms. They employed that sum in buying the great tithe of Morinvilliers, and consecrating the produce of it to distribute clothes and shoes every year, on the day of the Nativity of Our Lady, to eighty poor: *Quod unusquisque pauper quinque alnas de burello novo et sotulares novos . . . percipiet.* If this tithe produced more than was necessary for the number appointed, this surplus was to be employed exclusively in buying shoes for other poor, all for the good of the soul of the said lady.—*MSS.* GUITTON, p. 421, from the copy of Langres. It would be easy to quote ten thousand analogous examples; we limit ourselves here to two or three of those which belong to the same Abbey of St. Bernard.

[2] Information furnished to the author in 1839 by the octogenarian Postel, who had been plumber of the ancient abbey, now transformed into a central police-office. Elisende, Countess of Bar-sur-Seine, gave in 1224 a *villa* to the abbey, with the intention of providing specially the alms which were bestowed at that gate. We find also a gate called *La Donne*, in the sad ruins of Echarlis, a Cistercian abbey, situated between Joigny and Courtenay. At least it still existed in 1846. At Aubrac, a monastic hos-

though defaced and blocked up by the modern desecrators of the monastery of St. Bernard. No; the most enterprising traveller, the most unfriendly investigator, may search thoroughly, as we have done, through the ruins and traditions of the cloisters; he shall nowhere find a single monastery, however it may have been in its last days, which has not deserved the funeral oration, which we heard on visiting the remains of the Val-des-Choux, in Champagne, from the lips of an old woman contemporary with the monks,—"*It was a true convent of charity!*"

Our modern experience can, doubtless, easily conceive of means more intelligent and efficacious for relieving poverty, and, above all, for preventing it; but how can we refrain from feeling and acknowledging gratitude to those who, during so long a time and with such an inexhaustible munificence, have accomplished all the duties of charity and Christian brotherhood, according to the measure of the light of their times? Besides, it was not solely by direct almsgiving that they served, and softened, and improved Christian society: it was still more by the honour which they rendered to poverty. This, as one of their most courageous and most regretted defenders among ourselves has already indicated,[1] is one of the principal advantages which the religious orders offer to the world, but it is also one of the aspects which is most repugnant to that spirit which would fain exclude God from modern society. The infidel loves not the poor—they remind him too much of a compensating justice, of a future in which every one shall be put in his proper place for eternity. He loves not those who regard them with kindness and sympathy. He knows well that the power of the priest is enrooted in the miseries

pital of Rouergue, there was a gate called *De la Miche*, because they gave there a loaf of bread to all who came to ask it.—BOUSQUET, *L'Anc. Hôpital d'Aubrac*, p. 150.

[1] CH. LENORMANT, *Des Associations Religieuses dans le Catholicisme*, Paris, 1845, p. 182.

of this life. He would willingly say, with Barrère, "Almsgiving is an invention of sacerdotal vanity." He will never be able to eradicate the laws and necessities of afflicted nature; but we know that he has too often succeeded in securing a temporary triumph for that fatal system which seeks to make charity a humiliation,[1] alms an impost, and mendicity a crime; and by which the wicked rich man, more pitiless than he of the Gospel, will not even tolerate Lazarus upon the steps of his palace.

It is precisely the reverse of this that the religious orders have designed and accomplished. They were not satisfied simply to solace poverty; they honoured it, consecrated it, adopted, espoused it, as that which was greatest and most royal here below. "The friendship of the poor," says St. Bernard, "constitutes us the friends of kings, but the love of poverty makes kings of us."[2] "We are the poor of Christ." *Pauperes Christi* is the enviable distinction of the monks: and to prove it the better, we see, when the great orders proceeding out of the Benedictine stock declined, an entirely new family of Religious arise, taking as the basis of their existence the voluntary exercise of poverty in its most repulsive aspect—that is to say, mendicity—and lasting until our own days under the name of *Mendicant Orders*. But long before this, and at all times, the monks knew well how to ennoble poverty. At the beginning they opened their ranks, and placed there, from the origin of their institution, slaves, serfs, and men of the extremest indigence, beside, and sometimes above, princes and nobles: for it is above all to the monastic condition that the fine expression of the Comte de Maistre upon the priesthood in

[1] "Charity degrades and lowers those who receive it: beneficence does not so."—Extract of the Report after which the Boards of Charity continued to take the name of Boards of Beneficence in 1831, quoted in the *Annales de la Charité*, t. i. p. 597, Oct. 1845.

[2] "Amicitia pauperum regum amicos constituit: amor paupertatis reges."—S. Bern., ep. ciii.

ancient society applies: "It was neither above the last man of the State, nor beneath the first."[1]

And even to the poor who did not enter into their ranks, the monastic order presented a spectacle more adapted than any other to console them, and to elevate them in their own eyes—that of the poverty and voluntary humiliation of the great men of the earth who enrolled themselves in a crowd under the frock.[2] From the cradle of the institution, the fathers and the doctors of the Church had already ascertained the consolation which the poor experienced in seeing the sons of the greatest families clothed in these miserable monkish habits, which the most indigent would have disdained, and the labourer seated upon the same straw as the noble, or the general of an army: the one as free as the other in the same liberty, ennobled by the same nobility, serfs of the same servitude,[3] all blended in the holy equality of a voluntary humility.[4] During the whole course of the middle age, each year, each country, saw the perpetual renewal of that marvellous sacrifice of the most precious and envied possessions in the world, which their possessors immolated as they immolated themselves upon the altar of some obscure monastery. What lesson of resignation or humility is it possible to imagine for the poor, more eloquent than the sight of a queen, of the son of a king, or the nephew of an emperor, occupied by an effort of their own free choice in washing the plates, or oiling the shoes of the last peasant who had become a novice?[5] Now we can reckon by thousands, sovereigns, dukes, counts, nobles of

[1] *Lettre inédite sur l'Instruction Publique en Russie*, AMI DE LA RÉLIGION, t. cxix. p. 212.

[2] S. JOHN CHRYSOST., in *Matthæum Homil.*, 68 et 69, ed. Gaume, t. vii. p. 761 et 773.

[3] *Advers. Oppug. Vit. Monast.*, lib. iii. t. i. p. 115.

[4] *Homil. in Matth.*, 62, p. 795.

[5] Let us quote, among many others of whom we shall speak later, St. Radegund, wife of Clotharius I.; Carloman, son of Pepin the Short; St. Frederick, cousin of the emperor St. Henry; St. Amedeus of Bonnevaux; Henri, brother of Louis the Fat, monk at Clairvaux.

every order, and women of equal rank, who have given themselves to such vile offices, burying in the cloister a grandeur and a power, of which the diminished grandeurs, ephemeral and unconsidered, of our modern society can give no idea.[1] And even now, in our own days, wherever the cloister is permitted to survive or to be resuscitated, the same sacrifices, in proportion to our social inferiority, reappear—the same homage is rendered to poverty by the free-will of the rich—so natural has the immolation of self become to a man who is governed by grace, and so inexhaustible is the treasure of consolation and respect which the Church, mother of all the religious orders, holds always open to the poorest among her children.

These first foundations laid, and these primary conditions of the true grandeur and supreme utility of the monks sufficiently indicated, let us pass to those services less brilliant, but also less disputed, which all agree in reckoning to their credit.

And if you would have us speak, in the first place, of the services which they have rendered to knowledge, we desire no better. We can never adequately tell how marvellously their life was adapted for study—for the ardent, active, and assiduous cultivation of letters. We can never sufficiently celebrate their touching modesty, their indefatigable researches, their penetration almost supernatural. We can never sufficiently regret the resources and the guarantees offered by these great centres of literature to the most elevated works of erudition, of history, of criticism, by that spirit of succession, that transmission of an intellectual and moral inheritance, which encouraged them to the longest

[1] To measure the abyss which separates modern ranks and titles from those which were sacrificed in the middle age by embracing cloistral life, one has only to picture to one's self the difference between a count of to-day and a count of the twelfth century. And with the exception of ecclesiastical dignities alone, is it not very much the same with all titles and distinctions whatsoever?

and most thankless undertakings. Ah! who shall restore, not only to studious readers, but, above all, to authors, these vast and innumerable libraries, always keeping up to the day, and receiving the contemporary stream of all publications seriously useful, which, by that very fact, secured to these publications an utterance which they lack at the present time, and which they ask, like everything else, with anxious servility from the State? Let us add, that we can never regret sufficiently that disinterested devotion to science, apart from the self-satisfaction of vanity or any material advantage, which seems to have perished with them.[1]

But the service which we should most desire to secure ourselves from forgetting, and which the religious orders have rendered longest and with most success to the human mind, has been the purifying it by charity and subduing it by humility. They have thus converted a larger number of *savants* than they have made; and these were, of all conversions, the ones most highly considered in the middle age, which understood that of all pride the most dangerous and incurable is that of knowledge. We owe to a monk that saying which pronounces the eternal condemnation of intellectual pride—"To know, is to love."[2]

And let us once more celebrate all that they have done to cultivate and people the West. There we can say nothing that does not fall short of the truth. But every attempt at justice, however tardy and incomplete, will be at least a commencement of reparation towards those pretended sluggards, so long and so unjustly calumniated, and of legitimate protest against the odious ingratitude of which

[1] Let us recall, in connection with this, the noble homage which has been rendered in our day to the Benedictines of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, by one of the most illustrious of our modern scholars, by a man of whom it may be said with justice that he was worthy to belong to the body which he has so well comprehended and so much praised—M. Guérard, in his prolegomena of the *Polyptique d'Irminon*.

[2] Trithemius, Abbot of Spanheim.

they have been victims. Who will be able to believe, hereafter, that the French people has permitted the men and the institutions to which three-eighths of the cities and towns of our country owe their existence, to be, in their name, ignominiously driven forth, pursued, and proscribed?[1] Let us unfold the map of France. Let us mention the names of towns actually existing. St. Brieuc, St. Malo, St. Leonard, St. Yrieix, St. Junien, St. Calais, St. Maixent, St. Servan, St. Valery, St. Riquier, St. Omer, St. Pol, St. Amand, St. Quentin, St. Venant, Bergues St. Vinox, St. Germain, St. Pourçain, St. Pardoux, St. Diey, St. Avold, St. Séver. All these bear the names of men; yes, and the names of saints, and, what is more, the names of monks! The names of men admirable, but now unknown, forgotten, disdained, even in the midst of these ungrateful towns, which owe their existence to the devoted labours of these ancient fanatics! Ask an actual inhabitant of one of these towns, it matters not which, who was the founder whose name and memory ought, we might suppose, to be identified with his earliest and most lasting impressions. He cannot answer. Yet the pagans themselves felt, acknowledged, and consecrated, a sweet and inoffensive respect for municipal traditions, for the genealogies of places, and that holy old age of cities, which Pliny, in his admirable epistle, loves to describe and identify with their dignity and liberty itself.[2]

But besides these, how many other flourishing towns are there everywhere, which, without bearing their origin written in their name, are not the less born in the shadow of the cloister, and under the protection of the paternal government

[1] According to the calculation of P. LONGUEVAL, *Histoire de l'Eglise Gallicane.*

[2] "Reverere conditores deos, nomina deorum; reverere gloriam veterem et hanc ipsam senectutem, quæ in homine venerabilis, *in urbibus sacra est.* Sit apud te honor antiquitati, sit ingentibus factis, sit fabulis quoque: nihil ex cujusquam dignitate, nihil ex libertate, nihil etiam ex jactatione decerpseris."—C. PLINIUS SEC., *Ad Maximum*, epist. viii. 24.

of the monks! In France, for example: Guéret,[1] Pamiers,[2] Perpignan, Aurillac, Luçon, Tulle, St. Pons, St. Papoul, St. Girons, St. Lizier, Lescar, St. Denis, Redon, La Réole, Nantua, Sarlat, Abbeville, Domfront, Altkirch, Remiremont, Uzerches, Brives, St. Jean d'Angély, Gaillac, Mauriac, Brioude, St. Amand en Berry.[3] In Franche Comte alone: Lure, Luxeuil, the two Baumes, Faverney, Chateau-Chalon, Salins, Morteau, Mouthe, Montbenoît, and St. Claude, all founded by the monks, who have peopled the Jura and its hillsides. In Belgium: Ghent, Bruges, Mons, Maubeuge, Nivelle, Stavelot, Malmédy, Malines, Dunkirk, St. Trond, Soignies, Ninove, Renaix, Liège. In Germany: Fulda, Fritztar, Wissemburg, St. Goar, Werden, Hoxter, Gandersheim, Quedlinburg, Nordhausen, Lindau, Kempten, Munster. In England: Westminster, Bath, Reading, Dorchester, Whitby, Beverley, Ripon, Boston, Hexham, Evesham, St. Edmundsbury, St. Ives, St. Albans, St. Neots. In Switzerland: Schaffhausen, Soleure, St. Maurice, Appenzell, St. Gall, Seckingen, Glaris, Lausanne, Lucerne, and Zurich.

A tiresome enumeration, certainly; but how is it that these men of whom we speak were never tired of founding, of constructing, of building up, of making populous and fruitful? How is it that they have had the gift, the art, and the taste of creating and preserving, just as the modern

[1] Founded in 720 by the Abbot St. Pardoux, called at first the *Bourg-aux-Moines*.

[2] Castle belonging to the Abbey of Fredelas, restored to the abbey by Roger II., Count of Foix, so that the village formed around the enclosure. It is from this fusion of the castle, the abbey, and the village, that the episcopal town of Pamiers has sprung.—We shall dispense with attaching an analogous note to each of the names which we shall quote.

[3] We quote only the chief places of the diocese, of the province, or of the district, and we leave unnoticed many other localities more or less important, which have had a monastery for their cradle, such as Cluny, Tournus, Mouzon, Paray-le-Monial, la Chaise-Dieu, Aigues-Mortes (founded by the Abbey of Psalmodi), &c. We refer to the learned work of M. Branche, *L'Auvergne au Moyen Age*, t. i. p. 439, for the curious enumeration of the thirty-six towns, market-towns, and villages of Auvergne, which owed their origin to the monks.

instinct has too often that of destruction? Ah, yes; it is fatiguing to listen while we narrate and celebrate the works of those who build, as it is fatiguing to listen to the praises of virtue. Those who write and those who read the history of our days, need fear no such lassitude. But it is necessary to bear with it for a little, if we wish to have the slightest notion of monastic institutions.

And it is not only their incredible fertility which we must admire, but also the prodigious duration of that which they have brought forth. Oh, miracle of Christian greatness! it is in preaching the frailty of human things, the nothingness of all human productions; it is in demonstrating this by their example, by their retirement, by a steady sacrifice of rank, of family, of fortune, and of country, that they have succeeded in creating monuments and societies the most lasting which we have seen upon the earth, and which would seem able to brave indefinitely the action of time, if modern barbarism had not appeared to substitute itself in the place of time, as in that of right and justice. How many monasteries have lasted seven, eight, ten, sometimes even fourteen centuries;[1] that is to say, as long as the French royalty, and twice as long as the Roman republic!

We admire the works of the Romans: masters and tyrants of the world, they used the strength of a hundred different nations to create those constructions which archæologists and the learned have taught us to place above all others. But what then must we say of these poor solitaries?[2] They have taken nothing from any one; but,

[1] For example, Lerins, Marmoutier, St. Claude, all three prior to the French royalty; le Mont-Cassin, Luxeuil, Micy, and many others that will appear successively in our recital.

[2] "Those long and costly works," says the father of Mirabeau, "which are a sort of ambition and joy to bodies which regard themselves as perpetual, always slow to alienate, always strong to preserve, are beyond the powers of private individuals. It is the same with the buildings. The same solidity, the same perfection. One of the churches of our

without arms and without treasure, with the sole resource of spontaneous gifts, and thanks to the sweat of their own brow, they have covered the world with gigantic edifices, which are left to the pickaxe of civilised Vandals. They have achieved these works in the desert, without roads, without canals, without machinery, without any of the powerful instruments of modern industry, but with an inexhaustible patience and constancy, and at the same time with a taste and discernment of the conditions of art, which all the academies might envy them. We say more—there is no society in the world which might not go to their school, to learn at the same time the laws of beauty and those of duration.

abbey is known in our history by a famous episode, for 700 years; it is absolutely in the same state as it was then. Where are the private buildings erected at that time of which a stone is standing now?"—*L'Ami des Hommes*, 1758, tom. i. p. 25.

CHAPTER V

HAPPINESS IN THE CLOISTER

Cio ch' io vedeva mi sembrava un riso
Dell' universo . . . .
O gioia! o ineffabile allegrezza!
O vita intera d' amore e di pace!
O senza brama sicura richezza!
Luce intellettual piena d' amore,
Amore di vero ben pien di letizia,
Letizia che trascende ogni dolzore.

DANTE, *Parad.*, c. 27–30.

WHAT lasted most amidst the monks was not only their monuments and works, material and external: it was the interior edifice, the moral work, and, above all, the happiness which they enjoyed—that pure and profound happiness which reigned in them and around them.[1]

Yes, even in the bosom of that life which they despised, and which they had offered as a sacrifice to God, God by a permanent miracle of His mercy has caused them always to find a joy and felicity unknown to other men. Yes, happiness, that rare and much-desired gift, reigned without rival in those monasteries which were faithful to the rule of their founders, to the law of their existence. This is evident even

[1] I know no writer who has better comprehended and shown the happiness of monastic life, such as it is described and authenticated by ancient authors, than Mr. Kenelm Digby, in the tenth volume of the curious and instructive collection, entitled *Mores Catholici*, London, 1840. It has served to guide me in this attractive study, and has afforded me a pleasure which I would wish to share with all my readers by referring them to this valuable work.

in the charming names which the monks gave to the places of their retirement and penance—Bon-Lieu,[1] Beau-Lieu,[2] Clair-Lieu,[3] Joyeux-Lieu,[4] Cher-Lieu,[5] Chere-Ile,[6] Vaulx-la-Douce,[7] Les Delices,[8] Bon-Port,[9] Bon-Repos,[10] Bonne-Mont,[11] Val-Sainte,[12] Val-Benoite,[13] Val-de-Paix,[14] Val-d'Esperance,[15] Val-Bonne,[16] Val-Sauve,[17] Nid-d'Oiseau,[18] Font-Douce,[19] the Voie-du-Ciel,[20] the Porte-du-Ciel,[21] the Couronne-du-Ciel,[22] the Joug-Dieu,[23] the Part-Dieu,[24] the Paix-Dieu,[25] the Clarté-Dieu,[26] the Science-de-Dieu,[27] the Champ-de-Dieu,[28] the Lieu-

[1] Good Place, of the order of Citeaux, in Limousin, and several others of the same name.

[2] Beautiful Place, Abbey of the Benedictines in Lorraine; of Citeaux, in England, in Rouergue, and elsewhere.

[3] Bright Place, Cistercians, in Lorraine.

[4] Joyous Place, Netley, the *Læto Loco*, in England.

[5] Dear Place, Cistercians, in Franche-Comté.

[6] Dear Island, *Cara Insula*, in Norway.

[7] Sweet Vale, Cistercians, in Champagne.

[8] The Delights, *Las Huelgas*, near Burgos, in Castile.

[9] Good Haven, Cistercians, in Normandy.

[10] Good Rest, Cistercians, in Brittany.

[11] Good Mountain, Cistercians, near Geneva.

[12] Holy Valley, Carthusian, in Switzerland.

[13] Blessed Valley, order of Citeaux, in the Lyonnais.

[14] Valley of Peace, Carthusian, in Switzerland.

[15] Valley of Hope, Carthusian, in Burgundy.

[16] Good Valley, Carthusian, in Languedoc; order of Citeaux, in Roussillon. There was besides a multitude of Good Vales and Good Valleys.

[17] Valley of Salvation, Citeaux, in Languedoc.

[18] Bird's Nest, Benedictines, in Anjou.

[19] Sweet Fountain, Benedictines, in Saintonge.

[20] The Way of Heaven, Carthusian, in the kingdom of Murcia.

[21] The Gate of Heaven, Carthusian, in the kingdom of Valencia.

[22] The Crown of Heaven, *Himmelskrone*, in Germany.

[23] God's Yoke, Benedictines, in Beaujolais.

[24] The Portion of God, Carthusian, in Switzerland.

[25] The Peace of God, order of Citeaux, in the neighbourhood of Liége.

[26] The Brightness of God, Citeaux, in Touraine.

[27] The Knowledge of God, Benedictines, in Lorraine, *Theologium*.

[28] The Field of God, *Cultura Dei*, Benedictines of Maisa.

de-Dieu,[1] the Port-Suave,[2] the Pré-Heureux,[3] the Pré-Bénit,[4] the Sylve-Bénit,[5] the Régle,[6] the Reposoir,[7] the Reconfort,[8] L'Abondance,[9] La Joie.[10]

And this joy, so lasting and so lively, reigned in their hearts with all the greater warmth, in proportion to the austerity of their rule and the fidelity and completeness with which they observed it.[11] Their testimony is so unanimous in this respect, that we are obliged either to believe it, or to believe that all which is holiest and most pure in the Church has, during successive centuries, directed the publication of a lie to humanity—a supposition so much the more absurd that monastic historians have never shunned the sad duty of recording the disorders and sufferings produced by any relaxation or contempt of their primitive constitution.

The indisputable evidence of this happiness shines from every page of the writings left to us by the monastic fathers, doctors, and historians. They passionately loved those monasteries which we consider prisons, and the life which they led in them.

"Toto corde meo te, Centula mater, amavi."[12]

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[1] The Place of God, *Dilo* for *Dei Locus*, Premontrès, near Joigny; *Loc Dieu*, Cistercians, in Rouergue and elsewhere.

[2] The Haven of Salvation, *Portus-Suavis*, corrupted to *Poursas* and *Poussay*, a noble chapter-house in Lorraine.

[3] The Happy Meadow, *Felix Pré*, near Givet.

[4] The Blessed Meadow, Cistercians, in La Marche.

[5] The Blessed Wood, Carthusian, in Dauphiny.

[6] The Rule, *Regula*, the Réole, Benedictines, in Aquitaine.

[7] The Resting-place, Carthusian, in Savoy.

[8] Consolation, Cistercian, in Nivernais.

[9] Abundance, Benedictine, in Savoy.

[10] Joy. Two abbeys bear this name, one in Champagne, the other in Brittany.

[11] This phenomenon, which has never failed to reappear at the origin of all religious orders, and to last as long as they have maintained their primitive fervour, presents itself anew amidst the difficulties of our modern life. The houses of La Trappe overflow with novices. On the contrary, during last century, the numerous abbeys where the Commende had destroyed all regular discipline, and in which life was almost as easy as in the world, knew not where to turn for recruits.

[12] HARIULFI, *Chron. Centul.*, concluded in 1088, ap. DACHERY, *Spicileg.*, v. ii. p. 356.

It is with this exclamation of love that the beautiful and curious chronicle of the great Abbey of St. Riquier, in Ponthieu, is concluded; and five centuries later the Abbot Trithemius, one of the most celebrated historians of the Benedictines, made a similar exclamation on completing the first half of his celebrated annals of the beloved abbey where he had been trained: "Me sola Hirsaugia gaudet."[1] The echo of that joy is prolonged from century to century. The austere St. Peter Damien calls Cluny a "*garden of delights.*"[2] St. Bernard, the father of a hundred and sixty monasteries which he had filled with the flower of his contemporaries, was never weary of repeating "Good Lord! what happiness Thou procurest for Thy poor!"[3] And Pierre de Blois, in leaving the Abbey of Croyland to return into his own country, stopped seven times to look back and contemplate again the place where he had been so happy.[4]

They loved these dear retreats so much that they reproached themselves for it, as we might reproach ourselves for loving too much the world and its fascinations; and when it was necessary to leave them, were obliged to recall to themselves their inviolable laws of Christian self-denial. "Oh, my cell!" said Alcuin, at the moment of leaving his cloister for the Court of Charlemagne, "sweet and well-beloved home, adieu for ever! I shall see no more the woods which surround thee with their interlacing branches and flowery verdure, nor thy fields full of wholesome and aromatic herbs, nor thy streams of fish, nor thy orchards, nor thy gardens where the lily mingles with the rose. I

[1] P. 616 of the edition of ST. GALL, 1690, in folio.—He says again in the dedication of his work, "Nimia dilectione Hirsaugensium devictus laborem hunc magnum libens suscepi;" and at the end of the second part, "Quanto Hirsaugianos amore diligam omnes, saltem laboribus meis communicatis ad loci honorem ostendam," t. ii. p. 692.

[2] "Hortus deliciarum."

[3] "Deus bone! quanta pauperibus procuras solatia!"

[4] PETR. BLESENSIS, *Contin.*, Ing. Croyland, ap. GALE, *Rer. Angt., Script.*, v. i.

shall hear no more these birds who, like ourselves, sing matins and celebrate their Creator, in their fashion—nor those instructions of sweet and holy wisdom which sound in the same breath as the praises of the Most High, from lips and hearts always peaceful. Dear cell! I shall weep thee and regret thee always; but it is thus that everything changes and passes away, that night succeeds to day, winter to summer, storm to calm, weary age to ardent youth. And we, unhappy that we are! why do we love this fugitive world? It is Thou, O Christ! that puttest it to flight, that we may love Thee only; it is Thy love which alone should fill our hearts—Thee, our glory, our life, our salvation!"[1]

The happiness of the monks was natural, lasting, and profound. They found it, in the first place, in their work, in regular labour, sustained and sanctified by prayer;[2] then in all the details of a life so logical, so serene, and so free —free in the highest sense of the word. They found it, above all, in their enviable indifference to the necessities of domestic and material life, from which they were delivered, partly by the simplicity and poverty of their condition, and partly by the internal organisation of the community, where all such solicitudes rested upon an individual, upon the abbot, who, assisted by the cellarer, undertook that charge for the love of God and the peace of his brethren.

Thus, in the midst of tranquil labour and a sweet uniformity, their life was prolonged and wrought out. But it

[1] "O mea cella, mihi habitatio dulcis amata,
Semper in æternum, O mea cella vale! . . .
Omne genus volucrum matutinas personat odas,
Atque Creatorem laudat in ore Deum." . . .
ALCUINI, *Opera*, v. ii. p. 456, edit. Frœben.

[2] "Martyris Albani, sit tibi tuta quies!
Hic locus ætatis nostræ primordia novit,
Annos felices lætitiæque dies! . . .
Militat hic Christo, noctuque diuque labori
Indulget sancto religiosa cohors."
—Lines of NECKHAM, Abbot of Cirencester in 1217, upon the abbey of St. Alban, ap. DIGBY, x. 545.

was prolonged without being saddened. The longevity of the monks has always been remarkable. They knew the art of consoling and sanctifying old age, which, in the world—but especially in modern society, where a devouring activity, wholly material, seems to have become the first condition of happiness—is always so sad. In the cloister we see it not only cherished, honoured, and listened to by younger men, but even, so to speak, abolished and replaced by that youth of the heart which there preserved its existence through all the snows of age, as the prelude of the eternal youth of the life above.

They were, besides, profoundly impressed by the beauty of nature and the external world. They admired it as a temple of the goodness and light of God, as a reflection of His beauty. They have left us a proof of this, first in their choice of situation for the greater number of their monasteries, which are so remarkable for the singular suitableness and loveliness of their site; and also in the descriptions they have left of these favourite spots. We read the pictures drawn by St. Bruno in speaking of his Charterhouse of Calabria,[1] or by the anonymous monk who has described Clairvaux,[2] and we are impressed with the same delicate and profound appreciation of rural nature which has dictated to Virgil and Dante so many immortal verses. Like the feudal nobles, and indeed before them, the monks possessed that taste for the picturesque—for nature in her wild, abrupt, and varied aspects—which prevailed in the middle ages, and which we find, like the apparition of an ideal desire, in the landscapes of Hemling and Van Eyck, although these great painters lived only in the monotonous plains of

[1] In his letter to Raoul le Verd, Archbishop of Rheims, ap. MABILLON, *Ann. Bened.*, t. v., l. 68, *ad finem.*

[2] *Opp. S. Bernardi*, t. ii.—We should also refer to the beautiful observations on nature, animate and inanimate, of FROWIN, Abbot of Engelberg, in the thirteenth century, in his *Explication of the Lord's Prayer*, ap. PLATTNER, *Schweizer Blätter fur Wissenschaft und Kunst.*, Schwyz, 1859, t. i. p. 52.

Flanders. That taste disappeared later, with many other forms of the good and beautiful. The successors of the old monks, like those of the knights, abandoned as soon as they could the forests and mountains for the prosaic uniformity of towns and plains.[1] But the Religious of the early ages discovered and enjoyed all the poetry of nature.

And if inanimate nature was to them an abundant source of pleasure, they had a delight still more lively and elevated in the life of the heart, in the double love which burned in them—the love of their brethren inspired and consecrated by the love of God. The same monastic pens which have written treatises upon the beauty of the earth,[2] have written others still more eloquent upon Christian Friendship.[3] Love, these writers say, derives its life from knowledge and memory, which, in turn, take from it their charm.[4] But their example is better upon this point than the most eloquent of essays. What a charming book might be written on friendship in the cloister! What endearing traits, what delightful words might be collected from the time of that Spanish Abbot of the eighth century who said, "I have left but one brother in the world, and how many brothers have I not found in the cloister!"[5]—down to those two nuns of the order of Fontevrault, one of whom having died before the other, appeared in a dream to her companion, and predicted her death, saying to her, "Understand, my love, that I am already in great peace; but I know not how to enter paradise without thee; prepare then and come at thy

[1] In the *Voyage Littéraire de Deux Bénédictins*, written at the commencement of the eighteenth century, the learned travellers designate constantly by the title of *site affreux* the sites of the ancient monasteries which they went to visit.

[2] *De Venustate Mundi*, by DENYS LE CHARTREUX.

[3] *De Amicitia Christiana et De Charitate Dei et Proximi*, tractatus duplex, by PIERRE DE BLOIS. Edit. in fol. de 1667, p. 497.

[4] "Ut amor ex scientia et memoria convalescat, et illa duo in amore dulcescant."—PETR. BLES. *Tract.*, i. cxi.

[5] "Unum fratrem dimisimus in sæculo: ecce quantos invenimus in monasterio."—*Contr. Elipandum*, l. ii., ap. BULTEAU, ii. 265.

quickest, that we may present ourselves together before the Lord."[1]

And how indeed can we wonder at the development given in the cloister to these sweet emotions of virtuous souls? The Religious require and have a right to seek in these mutual sympathies a preservation against the hardships and disgusts of their condition, an aliment for the dreams and ardour of their youth. In seeking under the robe of their brethren for tender, disinterested, and faithful hearts, they obeyed at once the instructions of the divine law and the example of the God-man. The holy Scriptures, on which they meditated every day in the psalms and lessons they chanted in their choral liturgy, presented to them immortal examples of the affection which might exist among the elect. In the Gospels, and, above all, in that one, the author of which has not feared to call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," they saw the radiance of that tender and profound friendship which the Saviour of all men vouchsafed, during His short life here below, to some predestined souls. In the Old Testament they found its type in the delightful history of that Jonathan who loved David as his soul—of that David who loved Jonathan more than a mother can love or a woman be loved; in the vows, and tears, and kisses which sealed the union of the king's son with the son of the shepherd.[2] Everything invited and encouraged them to choose one or several souls as the intimate companions of their life, and to consecrate that choice by an affection free as their vocation, pure as their profession, tender and generous

[1] "Notum tibi facio, dilecta. . . . Prepara ergo te et veni quantocius ut simul Domino præsentemur."—HERBERTI, *De Miraculis*, l. ii. c. 43, apud CHIFFLET, *Genus Illustre S. Bernardi.*

[2] "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." "And they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded." "We have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord." "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been to me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

as their youth. Thus initiated in the stainless pleasure of a union of hearts, they could again, with the sage, recognise, in the fidelity of these voluntary ties, "a medicine for life and for immortality."[1]

But where shall we find among ourselves a pen sufficiently pure and delicate to record these annals of real love? The most charming poet of our generation, though by his own errors the most unhappy, seems to have caught a glimpse of it, when, out of the midst of strains so strangely and dangerously beautiful, he permitted to escape him such lines as the following, a singular testimony to the high and generous inspirations which he knew too well how to interpret, and too often how to stifle:—

"Monastic arches, silent cloisters, lone
And sombre cells, ye know what loving is.
These are your chill cold naves, your pavements, stones
Which burning lips faint over when they kiss.
. . . . . .
With your baptismal waters bathe their face;
Tell them a moment how their knees must wear
The cold sepulchral stones before the grace,
Of loving as you loved, they hope to share.
Vast was the love which from your chalices,
Mysterious monks! with a full heart ye drew:
Ye loved with ardent souls! Oh, happy lot for you!"[2]

Should we not say that the hand which has traced these lines had been turning over the pages of that immortal code of divine love written by St. Bernard in his discourse upon the *Song of Songs*, where he speaks with such passionate earnestness that universal language of love, "which is understood only by those who love;"[3] where he celebrates the nuptials of the soul with God, and depicts in lines of light

[1] "Amicus fidelis medicamentum vitæ et immortalitatis."—*Ecclic.* vi. 16.

[2] ALFRED DE MUSSET, *Rolla.*

[3] "Amor ubique loquitur; et si quis horum quæ leguntur cupit adipisci notitiam, amet. . . . Lingua amoris ei qui non amat, barbara erit."—*Serm.* 79 *in Cantic.*

that bride who loves only for the sake of loving and being loved, who finds in love alone all that she seeks, all that she desires, all that she hopes, who no longer fears anything, nor doubts the love which she inspires any more than that which she feels?[1] Human tenderness, however eloquent, has never inspired accents more passionate or profound. And to prove how little the divine love, thus understood and practised, tends to exclude or chill the love of man for man, never was human eloquence more touching or more sincere, than in that immortal elegy by which Bernard suddenly interrupts the course of his sermons upon the Canticles of Solomon, to lament a lost brother snatched by death from the cloister, where they had lived in so much harmony and happiness. We all know that famous apostrophe—"Flow, flow, my tears, so eager to flow!—he who prevented your flowing, is here no more! . . . It is not he who is dead, it is I who now live only to die. Why, oh why have we loved, and why have we lost each other?"[2] It is thus that natural tenderness and legitimate affections vindicate their rights in the hearts of the saints, and penetrate there by means of that which Bernard himself calls the broad and sweet wound of love.[3] Thus this great disciple of Jesus loved and wept for him whom he loved, even here below, as Jesus loved and wept in Lazarus a mortal friend. "Behold how He loved him!"[4]

Without always exalting itself so high, the mutual affec-

[1] "Quæ amat, amat, et aliud novit nihil. . . . Ipse (amor) meritum, ipse præmium est sibi. . . . Fructus ejus, usus ejus. Amo, quia amo: amo ut amem. Sponsæ res et spes unus est amor."—*Sermo* 83. "Nihil dilectæ timendum. Paveant quæ non amant. . . . Ego vero amans, amari me dubitare non possum, non plus quam amare."—*Sermo* 84.

[2] "Exite, exite, lacrymæ jampridem cupientes: exite quia is qui vobis meatum obstringerit, commeavit. . . . Vivo ut vivens moriar, et hoc dixerim vitam! . . . Cur, quæso, aut amavimus, aut amisimus nos?"—*Sermo* 26. See also the admirable discourse of St. Bernard on the death of his friend Humbert, a monk of Clairvaux, t. i. p. 1066, ed. Mabillon.

[3] "Grande et suave vulnus amoris."

[4] John xi. 36.

tion which reigned among the monks flowed as a mighty stream through the annals of the cloister. It has left its trace even in the *formulas*, collected with care by modern erudition, and which, deposited in the archives of the different monasteries, served as models of the familiar epistles exchanged between communities, superiors, and even simple monks. We find here and there, in the superscription of these letters as well as in their text, those impulses of the heart which charm and refresh the patient investigator of the past. "To such an one, his humble fellow-countryman, who would embrace him with the wings of a sincere and indissoluble charity, sends salutations in the sweetness of true love."[1] And again—"I adjure you, by your gentleness, visit us often by letters and messages, that the long distance which separates us may not triumph over those who are united by the love of Christ." "To the faithful friend," says another of these forgotten rubrics, the barbarous Latin of which has doubtless served more than one loving and delicate soul. "Let us aspire, dearest brother, to be satisfied by the fruits of wisdom, and bedewed by the waters of the divine fountain, that the same and sole paradise may receive us, and open to our enjoyment the freedom of the celestial kingdom. . . . If thou wilt, it shall be well for us to be divided by vast territories, and withdrawn from each other under different skies—our tribulations are the same, and our prayers shall strengthen us by the union of our souls." Sometimes verse, faintly outlined, is mingled with the prose, to repeat the perpetual burden of all that correspondence. "Remember me—I always remember you; I owe to you, and I give you, all the love that is in my heart."[2]

[1] "Indissolubili vinculo individuæ sincerrimæque caritatis alis amplectendo illi, ille humilis terrigena in dulcedine vere caritatis salutem."—*Formules Inédites*, published from two MSS. of Munich and Copenhagen by EUG. DE ROZIÈRE, 1859, No. 68.—Cfr. Nos. 34 and 71.

[2] "Non sejungant longa terrarum spacia, quos Christi nectit amor. . . . Age jam, o meus carissime frater, . . . ut in regni celestis libertate . . .

But with how much greater force than in these anonymous formulas, with what constancy and impetuosity does that inexhaustible tenderness overflow in the authentic letters of the great monks, the collections of which certainly form one of the most precious monuments for the study of the past, as well as for that of the human heart. The more celebrated and powerful they are, the holier are they and the more they love. The correspondence of the most illustrious, of Geoffrey de Vendome, of Pierre le Venerable, and of St. Bernard, give incontestable proofs of this at every page, and the pleasure of our researches will be proportioned to the frequency with which we encounter them upon our road.

But even at the present moment we may appropriately quote certain lines which portray the heart of St. Anselm, who lived, loved, and was happy for sixty years in his Norman Abbey of Bec, before he was condemned to the glorious contests of his episcopate. "Souls, well beloved of my soul," he wrote to two of his near relatives whom he wished to draw to Bec, "my eyes ardently desire to behold you; my arms expand to embrace you; my lips sigh for your kisses; all the life that remains to me is consumed with waiting for you. I hope in praying, and I pray in hoping—come and taste how gracious the Lord is—you cannot fully know it while you find sweetness in the world. I would not deceive you; first, because I love you, and further, because I have experience of what I say. Let us be monks together, that now and always we may be but one flesh, one blood, and one soul. My soul is welded to your souls; you can rend it, but not separate it from you

gaudere valeamus. . . . Si vis, terrarum spatio divisi sumus atque sequestramur intervallo et celi inequali climate dirimemus, pari tamen tribulationum depremimur (sic) face.

Esto mei memores, sum vestri: debeo vobis
Et vovoe totum quicquid amore."

—E. DE ROZIÈRE, *Formules de S. Gall*, Nos. 39, 41, 58.

—neither can you draw it into the world. You must needs then live with it here, or break it; but God preserve you from doing so much harm to a poor soul which has never harmed you, and which loves you. Oh, how my love consumes me! how it compels me to burst forth into words! —but no word satisfies it. How many things would it write! but neither the paper nor the time are sufficient. Speak Thou to them, oh good Jesus! Speak to their hearts, Thou who alone canst make them understand. Bid them leave all and follow Thee. Separate me not from those to whom Thou hast linked me by all the ties of blood and of the heart. Be my witness, Lord, Thou and those tears which flow while I write!" [1]

The same earnestness is evident in his letters to the friends whom he had acquired in the cloister, and from whom a temporary absence separated him. He writes to the young Lanfranc—"'Far from the eyes, far from the heart,' say the vulgar. Believe nothing of it; if it was so, the farther you were distant from me, the cooler my love for you would be; whilst, on the contrary, the less I can enjoy your presence, the more the desire of that pleasure burns in the soul of your friend." [2] Gondulph, destined like himself to serve the Church in the midst of storms, was his most intimate friend. "To Gondulph, Anselm," he wrote to him: "I put no other or longer salutations at the head of my letter, because I can say nothing more to him whom I love. All who know Gondulph and Anselm know well what this means, and how much love is understood in these two names." And again—"How could I forget thee? Can a man forget one who is placed like a seal upon his heart? In thy silence I know that thou lovest me; and thou also,

[1] "Animæ dilectissimæ animæ meæ . . . concupiscunt oculi mei vultus vestros, extendunt se brachia mea ad amplexus vestros; anhelat ad oscula vestra os meum. . . . Dic tu, o bone Jesu, cordibus eorum. . . . Domine, tu testis es interius, et lacrymæ quæ me hoc scribente fluunt, testes sunt exterius."—*Epist.* ii. 28.

[2] *Epist.* i. 66.

when I say nothing, thou knowest that I love thee. Not only have I no doubt of thee, but I answer for thee that thou art sure of me. What can my letter tell thee that thou knowest not already, thou who art my second soul? Go into the secret place of thy heart, look there at thy love for me, and thou shalt see mine for thee."[1] To another of his friends, Gislebert, he says: "Thou knewest how much I love thee, but I knew it not. He who has separated us has alone instructed me how dear to me thou wert. No, I knew not before the experience of thy absence how sweet it was to have thee, how bitter to have thee not. Thou hast another friend whom thou hast loved as much or more than me to console thee, but I have no longer thee—thee! thee! thou understandest? and nothing to replace thee. Thou hast thy consolers, but I have only my wound. Those who rejoice in the possession of thee may perhaps be offended by what I say. Ah! let them content themselves with their joy, and permit me to weep for him whom I ever love."[2]

Nor could death, any more than absence, extinguish in the heart of the monk those flames of holy love. And when these gentle ties were broken, the dying carried with him a certainty that he should not be forgotten, and the survivor believed in the invisible duration of his tenderness, thanks to those prayers for souls, incessant and obligatory, which were identified with all the monastic habits—thanks to that devotion for the dead which received in a monastery its final

[1] "Quisquis enim bene novit Gondulfum et Anselmum, cum legit: Gondulfo Anselmus, non ignorat quid subaudiatur, vel quantus subintelligatur affectus."—*Ep.* i. 7. "Qualiter namque obliviscar tui? Te silente ego novi quia diligis me et me tacente scis quia amo te. Tu mihi conscius es quia ego non dubito de te; et ego tibi testis sum quia tu certus es de me."—*Ep.* i. 4. "Sed quid te docebit epistola mea quod ignores, o tu altera anima? Intra in cubiculum cordis tui."—*Ep.* i. 14.

[2] "Et quidem tu sciebas erga te dilectionem meam; sed utique ego ipse nesciebam eam. Qui nos scidit ab invicem, ille me docuit quantum te diligerem."—*Ep.* i. 75.

and perpetual sanction.[1] They were not content even with common and permanent prayer for the dead of each isolated monastery. By degrees, vast spiritual associations were formed among communities of the same order and the same country, with the aim of relieving by their reciprocal prayers the defunct members of each house. Rolls of parchment, transmitted by special messengers from cloister to cloister, received the names of those who had "emigrated," according to the consecrated expression, from "this terrestrial light to Christ," and served the purpose of a check and register to prevent defalcation in that voluntary impost of prayer which our fervent cenobites solicited in advance for themselves or for their friends.[2]

Here let us return to Anselm. When he was elected prior of Bec, a young monk called Osbern, jealous of his promotion, was seized with hatred towards him, and demonstrated it violently. Anselm devoted himself to this young man, gained upon him by degrees by his indulgence, traced for him the path of austerities, made him a saint, watched him night and day during his last sickness, and received his last sigh. Afterwards he still continued to love the soul of him who had been his enemy; and, not content with saying mass for him every day during a year, he hastened from monastery to monastery soliciting others to join him. "I beg of you," he wrote to Gondulph, "of you and of all my friends, to pray for Osbern. His soul is my soul. All that you do for him during my life, I shall accept as if you had done it for me after my death, and

[1] It is known that the Festival of the Commemoration of the Departed was instituted by St. Odilon, Abbot of Cluny, in 998.

[2] "De hac luce migravit, ut credimus, ad Christum. Deprecor vos omnes . . . ut me familiariter habeatis, maxime in sacris orationibus, et quando dies obitus mei, vobis notus fuerit, misericorditer de me facere dignemini. . . . Nomina fratrum defunctorum libenti animo suscipite . . . et ad vicina monasteria dirigite."—*Formules de S. Gall*, E. DE ROZIÈRE, Nos. 29 and 31. Compare the excellent work on this subject by M. LEOPOLD DELISLE, in the *Bibl. de l'Ecole des Chartes*, t. iii. 2d series.

when I die you shall leave me there. . . . I conjure you for the third time, remember me, and forget not the soul of my well-beloved Osbern. And if I ask too much of you, then forget me and remember him. . . . All those who surround me, and who love thee as I do, desire to enter into that secret chamber of thy memory where I am always: I am well pleased that they should have places near me there; but the soul of my Osbern, ah! I beseech thee, give it no other place than in my bosom."[1]

Great is the history of nations—their revolutions, their destinies, their mission, their glory, their punishments, their heroes, their dynasties, their battles; the tale is great, noble, and fruitful. But how much more fruitful and vast is the history of souls! Of what importance, after all, are his ancestors and his descendants to a man? Of what importance to an atom is the orbit in which it moves? That which does concern him is to love, to be loved, and, during this brief life, to know that he is the being dear above all things to another being. "It appears manifest," says Bossuet, with his solemn gravity, "that *man is the delight of man.*[2] There is no real key of the heart but love. Love is the law of the heart. It is this which moves its most secret inclinations and energies."[3] The solitary sufferings of that love, its emotions perpetually renewed, its crises, its revolutions, its confidence, and its enthusiasm—all that great world which palpitates within the narrow enclosure of a man's life, of a heart which loves, ah! this is the most beautiful and absorbing of histories; this is the

[1] "Anima ejus anima mea est. Accipiam igitur in illo vivus quicquid ab amicitia poteram sperare defunctus, ut sint otiosi, me defuncto. . . . Precor et precor et precor, memento mei et ne obliviscaris animæ Osberni dilecti mei. Quod si te nimis videar onerare, mei oblivisceré et illius memorare."—*Ep.* i. 4. "Eos interiori cubiculo memoriæ tuæ ibi, ubi ego assiduus assideo . . . colloca mecum in circuitu meo: sed animam Osberni mei, rogo, chare mi, illam on nisi in sinu meo."—*Ep.* i. 7.

[2] Sermon for the Circumcision.

[3] Sermon for Pentecost.—*Id.* for the Annunciation.

tale which endures and moves us all to the depths. Of all the scanty number of immortal pages which float upon the ocean of time, almost all are filled with this theme.

But let us see here the glory and unparalleled force of religion—it is this, that in resolving all social problems, and interpreting all historical revolutions, she retains everywhere, and above all, "the key of our hearts." She has a balm for all our sufferings, and an object for all our tenderness. She knows how to discipline passion without weakening it; better than drying up our too precious tears, she makes them flow from a source purified for ever by an eternal object. She replaces the twilight of our transitory dreams by the radiant and enchanting serenity of an undying light. She encircles our hearts with that flame, the rays of which shine through infinitude. She has originated and consecrated the supreme triumph of love. She crowns the most tender and powerful passions by something sweeter and stronger still, the happiness and the glory of sacrificing them to God. It is in monasteries that this science of true happiness and real love has been longest taught and practised. We have seen that religion does not interdict either the warm impulses of affection, or the endearing accents of the most penetrating sympathy to souls united in God. Let us ever listen to the sounds which are audible in that sacred silence: they will reveal, perhaps, some sweet and touching mystery of the history of souls. Let us give ear to the gentle and perpetual murmur of that fountain which every cloister once enclosed—an emblem and an echo of the spring from which gushed such inexhaustible love.

Therefore our monks were happy, and happy by love. They loved God, and they loved each other in Him, with that love which is strong as death. If we would seek the natural consequence, the general condition, and the best proof of all his happiness, we recognise it without difficulty in that external and internal peace, which was the predominant characteristic of their existence. A sweet and

holy peace which was the radiant conquest, the inalienable patrimony of those monks who were worthy of their name, and of which no one else, in an equal degree, has ever possessed the secret or the understanding!

St. Benedict, the greatest of monastic legislators, has received no nobler title from a grateful posterity than that of *Founder of Peace.*

"Ipse fundator placidæ quietis."[1]

We are, said St. Bernard, the *Order of the Peaceful.*[2] He had the most perfect right to say so: in the midst of that belligerent world of the middle ages, entirely organised for war, the monks formed a vast army of soldiers of peace, and that was, indeed, the title which they gave themselves: *Deo et paci militantibus.*[3]

See, therefore, how happiness, according to the divine promise, accompanies the ministers of peace. "To the counsellors of peace is joy."[4] It is not enough even to say happiness; we should say gaiety, *hilaritas*, that gaiety which Fulbert of Chartres, describing its union with the simplicity of the monks, called angelical.[5]

Of all the erroneous conceptions of Religious life, there is not one more absurd than that which would persuade us to regard it as a life sad and melancholy. History demonstrates precisely the contrary. Let us cease then to waste our pity upon all these *cloistered victims* of both sexes,

[1] ALFANO, Monk of Mont Cassin, and Archbishop of Salerno, quoted by Giesebrecht, *De Litterar. Stud. ap. Italos*, p. 48.

[2] *De Conversione*, c. 21.

[3] This is the title of the letter of Wibald, Abbot of Corvey, in the twelfth century, to the monks of Hastières, in Belgium. In the epitaphs of the monks, it is the eulogium which recurs oftenest: "*Pacifious, tranquilla pace serenus;*" "*Æmulus hic pacis;*" "*Fraternæ pacis amicus.*" See numerous examples collected by Digby, t. x. c. 1.

[4] Prov. xii. 20.

[5] "Angelica hilaritas cum monastica simplicitate."—FULB. CARNOT., *Ep.* 66.

phantoms created by false history and false philosophy, which serve as a pretext for the prejudices and the violence by which so many souls, made for a better life, and so many real victims of the most cruel oppression, are retained in the world. A truce to all these declamations of the wretchedness of being condemned to a uniform life, to unavoidable duties, and unvaried occupations. There is not one of the objections made against the life of the cloister which does not apply with quite as much force to conjugal life. The Christian, the true sage, knows well that perpetual obligations, voluntarily undertaken, never render a man permanently unhappy. He knows, on the contrary, that they are indispensable to order and peace in his soul. That which tortures and consumes, is neither obligation nor duty; it is instability, agitation, the fever of change. Ah! when the spirit of the world penetrated the cloister, and ended by stealing it away from the spirit of God—when it had introduced there the *commende*, the principle of individual property, indolence, coldness, all that corruption which lay usurpation sowed everywhere throughout the field, which she took upon herself to confiscate—then, doubtless, that which had been a rare and guilty exception, became an abuse too habitual and general. Then, doubtless, there was a crowd of vocations false or compulsory, and of bitter sorrows, stifled under the frock or the veil. But whilst it was permitted to the monastic orders to flourish in freedom under the wing of the Church, sheltered from secular invasions, melancholy was unknown, or at least appeared only now and then like a malady, the rareness of which renders it more frightful. "*They had no sadness*,"[1] is the testimony given of them in the fourth century, by the first of their apologists; "*they wage war with the devil as if they were playing*."[2]

[1] "Οὐδεν γὰρ ἔχουσι λυπηρόν."—S. JOANN. CHRYSOST., *in Matth. Homil.* 69, ed. Gaume, vii. 770.

[2] Literally, *dancing*, ὡσπερ χορεύοντες, *quasi choreas agentes*.—*Ibid.*

We see it unceasingly specified among the qualities of the most pious abbots and exemplary monks, that they were gay, joyous, amusing, loving to laugh, *jocundus, facetus.* These expressions overflow above all from the pen of Orderic Vital, who, speaking of himself in his long and precious history, tells us—"I have borne for forty-two years, with happiness, the sweet yoke of the Lord."[1] St. Anselm, that great and irreproachable monk, certainly knew what he said when he thus challenged the secular clergy of his time: "You who believe that it is easier to live religiously under the habit of a priest than to bear the burden of monastic life, behold and see with what lightness that burden is borne by Christians of each sex, of every age and condition, who fill the entire world with their songs of joy."[2] And six centuries after him, the Abbot de Rancé, who has been so often instanced to us as a type of monkish melancholy and suffering, opposed to the calumnies with which his Religious were then assailed, their conjunction of gaiety and edifying charity.[3]

But they made no monopoly of that peace and joy which was their inheritance; they distributed it with full hands to all who surrounded them—to all who gave them per-

[1] "Sincero monachorum conventui fœdere indissolubili sociatus, annos xlii. jam leve jugum Domini gratanter bajulavi."—ORDER. VIT., lib. v. p. 307.

[2] "Consideret per totum mundum quanta hilaritate utrique sexui, omni ætate et omni genere hominum, sit pondus illud cantabile."—S. ANSELM, Epist. ii. 12.

[3] "You might have said to that incredulous person that, in addition to 1500 to 2000 poor, whom, as I have often counted, they supported by public donations in the dear years, they also sustain privately, by monthly pensions, all the families in the neighbourhood who are unable to work; that they receive 4000 guests; that they nourish and maintain eighty monks; and all for an income of 8000 or 9000 livres at the most: and you might ask him to point out to you ten households, each with the same income, who do anything approaching to what those sluggards, as he calls them, do with a *gaiety* and an edification of which you would wish that he might be a spectator."—*Letter from the Abbot de Rancé to the Abbot Nicaise.*

mission—everywhere. They evidenced it, they preached it, they bestowed it upon all who approached them. "The monks," said the great Archbishop of Constantinople, whom we here quote for the last time,—"the monks are like the lighthouses placed on high mountains, which draw all navigators to the tranquil port which they light—those who contemplate them fear no more either darkness or shipwreck."[1]

The happiness enjoyed by the people who were subjects or neighbours of the religious orders when they themselves were free and regular, is a fact, the evidence of which is declared by history, and consecrated in the memory of all nations.[2] No institution was ever more popular, no masters were more beloved. Doubtless they have had their enemies and persecutors in all times, as the Church and virtue itself has had. But while Europe remained faithful, these were but a minority disavowed by general opinion. And even when that minority became master of the world, it succeeded in destroying the monastic orders only by violence and proscription. Wherever the orders, still free from lay corruption,[3] have perished, it has been amid the grief and lasting regret of the population which depended on them. And if elsewhere, as in France, where the epoch of their ruin was contemporary with the ruin of faith in the whole nation, their fall has been seen with indifference, at least it has never been called for by popular vengeance or antipathy.

The spoliations and crimes of which they were the

[1] S. JOAN. CHRYS., *Homil.* 59, *ad. Popul. Antiochenum.* He recurs constantly to this simile in his several writings. Cf. *Adv. Oppugn. Vit. Monast.*, lib. iii. t. i. p. 114. *Hom. in Epist. ad Timoth.*, 14, t. xi. p. 576, ed. Gaume.

[2] We have quoted a thousand times the German proverb: "Unter dem Krummstab ist es gut wohnen" (It is good to live under the crosier).

[3] It will be shown further on that we do not include in this judgment the monasteries morally ruined by the *commende*, or any other abuse, which succumbed in 1790; but that it refers to the destruction of those which had remained faithful to their rule in England, Germany, Sweden, and recently in Spain and Switzerland, where the people armed themselves to defend them.

victims, have been the work of princes or assemblies who plumed themselves upon their scorn for the affections as for the faith of the vulgar, and have inspired only regret and alarm to the people of the country, or to those inferior and indigent classes whose necessities and passions awake so much just solicitude at the present time. This testimony has been borne by all who have sincerely studied the history of their destruction, even among their adversaries.[1] Above all, it should be rendered to them by the author of these pages, who has visited, in many countries, the site of nearly two hundred monasteries, and who has collected, wherever any contemporaries of monastic charity survived, the expression of their gratitude and their regret. And how could they fail to exercise that influence, they "whose trade was doing disinterested good"?[2] How could they fail to be loved, they who loved so well? It was not only for their alms, for their practical generosity and hospitality, that they reigned thus in all hearts; it was for their benign and paternal sympathy, their active and cordial interest in the people; it was still more by their constant and active solicitude for the salvation and happiness of all suffering souls.[3]

[1] Let us quote, from among a thousand, a Portuguese author, a great partisan of the system which has ruined and enthralled the Church of his country, and who has recognised, but too late, the inconvenience of the indiscriminate suppression of monasteries. "We," says he, "who have assisted at the suppression of part of the ancient monasteries of Minho, and who have seen the tears of the people, who had always found their succour in their illnesses and bread in their old age,—we know not whether those tears were deceitful, but we know well that they gave an express contradiction to the theories of politicians who wrote far from the countries, in the silence of their cabinets, or in the midst of the noise of great towns."—*O Panorama, jornal litterario*, No. 27, Lisboa, 1837.

[2] Wordsworth.

[3] "Mitis erat cunctis, suavis, pius. . . .
Quem mœstum vidit, quem tristem, quemque dolentem
Affatu dulci mœrentia pectora mulcens."

This fragment, from the epitaph of an abbot of Gembloux, Herluin (ap. DACHERY, *Spicileg.*, t. ii.), applies to almost all the abbots who are known to us in history.

"Weep with the unhappy,"[1] said one of the patriarchs of the monastic order, St. Columba; and it was a precept which they never disobeyed. Nowhere has the human race in its joys and sorrows found sympathies more living and productive than under the frock of the monk. A life of solitude, mortification, and celibacy, far from extinguishing in the heart of the monk the love of his neighbour, augmented its intensity, and redoubled by purifying it. We have proof of this in their innumerable writings, in their animated chronicles, in all that remains to us of them. Their writers employed, to designate that disposition which was native to monastic souls, a special term, that of *benignitas*—that is to say, benevolence elevated and purified by piety; *benignitas*, a word entirely Christian, entirely monastic, and as difficult to translate as the other two habitual virtues of the cloister, *simplicitas*[2] and *hilaritas*.

Their doors were always open, not only to the poor and exiled, but to all souls fatigued with life, bowed down under the weight of their faults, or simply enamoured of study and silence. To all these different guests the monk offered his peace and shared it with them.

Thus there was not a necessity, moral or material, for which the monks, who, of all the benefactors of humanity, were certainly the most generous, the most ingenious, the most amiable, disinterested, and persevering, had not attempted to provide. From thence resulted much happiness imperceptible in the annals of history, but distilled in abundance into the heart of the Christian people during all the period of monastic fervour; from thence came that invincible peace, that luminous serenity, which held sway over so many souls—even in the midst of the most stormy epochs of the Middle Age.

[1] "Pro misero miserans lacrymas effunde sodali."—S. COLUMBAN, *Carmen Monastichon*, ap. CANISIUS, *Thesaur.*, t. ii. p. 749.

[2] "Hic jacet in tumba simplex fidelisque columba."—*Epitaph of an abbot of St. Victor, in* 1383, ap. DIGBY, t. x. p. 441.

Who knows, besides, how much the mere sight of their worship, the pomp of their ceremonies so majestic and solemn, and the very sound of their chants, delighted the surrounding population? These were during many centuries the favourite spectacles, the *fêtes* most sought after by the poor and by the country people, who resorted thither in crowds, and always found a place. Those who were prosperous in the world—the great, and rich, and even strangers — found a heartfelt enjoyment in contemplating close at hand the peaceable course of monastic life, though they did not cease to navigate for themselves the agitated waves of the world; they loved to quench their thirst in that pure and fresh stream. The mere sight of the monks, who were at the same time so austere and so happy, often sufficed to determine remarkable conversions;[1] and always renewed in the heart salutary thoughts of eternity. The most beautiful souls, the highest intelligences, have yielded to that attraction, and have eloquently confessed it. True philosophy has rendered to it, by the mouth of Leibnitz, a generous homage.[2] True poetry has appreciated its singular and unconquerable charm. At a time when more than one symptom of approaching decadence obscured the horizon, Petrarch spoke of monastic solitude like a Father of Vallombrosa or of the Chartreuse,[3] and Tasso has never been more happily inspired than in his sonnet addressed to the order of St. Benedict, the touching

[1] For example, that of Guibert of Nogent, so well related by himself, *Vita propria*.

[2] "He who is ignorant of their services or who despises them," says Leibnitz, speaking of the monks, "has only a narrow and vulgar idea of virtue, and stupidly believes that he has fulfilled all his obligations towards God by some habitual practices accomplished with that coldness which excludes zeal and love."

[3] See his treatise *De Vita Solitaria*, especially Chapter viii. of Book 2, which begins thus: "O vere vita pacifica, cœlestique simillima. O vita melior super vitas. . . . Vita reformatrix animæ. . . . Vita philosophica, poetica, sancta, prophetica," p. 256, ed. 1581.

melody of which comes opportunely to interrupt this poor prose:[1]—

"Nobil porto del mondo e di fortuna,
Di sacri e dolci studj alta quiete,
Silenzi amici, e vaghe choistre, e liete!
Laddove e l' ora, e l' ombra occulta, e bruna:
Templi, ove a suon di squilla altri s'aduna,
Degni viepiù d' archi, e teatri, e miete,
In cui talor si sparge, e 'n cui si miete
Quel che ne puo nudrir l' almà digiuna.
Usci di voi chi, fra gli acuti scogli,
De llanave di Pietro antica e carca,
Tenne l' alto governo in gran tempesta.
A voi, deposte l' arme e i feri orgogli,
Venner gli Augusti: e 'n voi s' ha pace onesta,
Non pur sicura: e quindi al ciel si varca."[2]

Beside that great Italian and Catholic poet, we quote the master of English prose, the Protestant Johnson, whose masculine genius appreciated, even in the eighteenth century, the holy beauty of monastic institutions. "I never read," said he, "of a hermit, but in imagination I kiss his feet: never of a monastery, but I fall on my knees and kiss the pavement."

Thus, then, by acknowledgment of the most competent and impartial judges, the much-abused monks had found the secret of the two rarest things in the world—happiness and duration. They had discovered the art of reconciling greatness of soul with humility, a tranquillised heart with an ardent mind, freedom and fulness of action with a minute and absolute submission to rule, ineffaceable traditions with an absence of all hereditary property, activity with peace, joy with labour, social life with solitude, the greatest moral force with the greatest material feebleness.

[1] Among the modern poets, no one has celebrated with more feeling and truth the glory of the Monastic Orders, nor more eloquently deplored their ruin, than the English Wordsworth.

[2] TASSO, *Rime Sacre e Morali*, Sonn. 5.

And this marvellous contrast—this strange union of the most diverse qualities and conditions—they had been able to maintain during a thousand years through all the frailties of human things, and despite a thousand abuses, a thousand causes of corruption, decadence, and ruin. They would have lasted still if tyrants, sophists, and rhetoricians, under pretext of curing the sick man whom they hated, had not slaughtered him to enrich themselves with his spoil.

Now all has disappeared: that fountain of the purest and most inoffensive happiness to be found upon earth is exhausted; that generous stream which flowed through ages in waves of incessant and fruitful intercession is dried up.[1] We might say a vast interdict had been cast upon the world. That melodious voice which the monks raised day and night from the bosom of a thousand sanctuaries to assuage the anger of Heaven, and draw down peace and joy into Christian hearts, is silenced among us.[2] Those fair and dear churches, where so many generations of our fathers resorted to seek consolation, courage, and strength to strive against the evils of life, are fallen. Those cloisters which offered a safe and noble asylum to all the arts and all the sciences — where all the miseries of man were solaced—where the hungry were always satisfied, the naked clothed, the ignorant enlightened, exist no more except as ruins, stained by a thousand ignoble profanations. Those sylvan heights, those holy mountains, those elevated places, where thoughts of God had their habitation—"He dwelleth on high" (Isaiah xxxiii. 5)—which heretofore cast upon the

[1] "It was as though the Kaiser had stopped the fountains of one of the Lombard rivers. . . . That Carthusian world of peaceful sanctity, of king-protecting intercession, of penitence and benediction, of heaven realised below, was signed away, swept from the earth by a written name!"—FABER, *Signs and Thought in Foreign Churches*, p. 165, in reference to the suppression of the Carthusians of Pavia by Joseph II.

[2] "Dulcis cantilena divini cultus, quæ corda fidelium mitigat ac lætificat, conticuit."—ORDER. VITAL., t. xii. lib. xiii. p. 908, ed. Duchesne.

world a light so pure, and shadows so fresh and salutary, resemble only the unwooded summits which we encounter here and there, transformed by the devastating axe into arid and naked rocks, where a blade of grass or a green leaf reappears no more. In vain the sun gilds them with his fruitful rays—in vain the dews of heaven suffuse them. The hand of the destroyer has been there: burned, dried up, condemned to an eternal sterility, they subsist no longer but as monuments of ruin and folly.

Often, however, nature has had pity upon these ruins, which testify to the pitiless ingratitude of men. She has thrown around these monuments of their rapacity decorations perpetually renewed—she has veiled their shame under the inexhaustible riches of her abundant verdure—she has wrapped them, as in a shroud, with her immortal robe of ivy and eglantine, with creeping plants and wild flowers. She attracts to them thus, even from the indifferent, a sympathetic and attentive gaze. And where the climate, or the still more cruel hand of man, has not permitted that struggle of nature against scorn and forgetfulness, sometimes a plaintive legend survives and resists them, like a last protest. Thus amid the ruins of the Abbey of Kilconnell, in the western extremity of Ireland, the Irish peasants, themselves spoiled and dishonoured for so many centuries, still show in the pavement of the ruined church certain long lines and little hollows, furrowed in the stone, according to their tale, by those drops of fire, the burning tears of the poor monks when they were expelled for ever from their well-beloved sanctuary.

CHAPTER VI

CHARGES AGAINST THE MONKS—MONASTIC WEALTH

Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?
—1 Cor. ix. 7.

But whilst we abandon ourselves, with tender and melancholy respect, to the contemplation of that extinguished grandeur, the world still retains in its recollection the clamours which, during three centuries, have assailed the monastic order, and does not cease to celebrate its fall.

"Monk!" said Voltaire, "what is that profession of thine? It is that of having none, of engaging one's self by an inviolable oath to be a fool and a slave, and to live at the expense of others."[1] That definition had been universally accepted and applauded in the kingdom which was the cradle of the order of Cluny and of the congregation of St. Maur, in the country of Benedict d'Aniane, of St. Bernard, of Peter the Venerable, of Mabillon, and of Rancé. It had crossed the Rhine; and the Emperor of that Germany which was converted by the monk Boniface, his Apostolic Majesty Joseph II., wrote in October 1781: "The principles of monasticism, from Pacôme to our own days, are entirely contrary to the light of reason." The French Revolution, and the secularisation imposed by Bonaparte on Germany, gave effect to these oracles of the modern world. The instructions of Madame Roland, who wrote—"Let us then sell the ecclesiastical possessions—we shall never be freed

[1] *Dialogues.*

of these ferocious beasts till we have destroyed their dens," [1] having been punctually executed, we might have hoped that hate should have been quenched by proscription.

But it is not so. The cruel passions which have buried that long-enduring institution under the ruins of the past, live still among us. Steadfast and implacable, they watch around that which they believe to be a tomb, fearing some day the resurrection of their victim; and at the least appearance of a renewed life, they pursue even his memory with trite and vulgar calumnies.

The diatribes which have been drawn from too celebrated pens by a culpable complaisance for these victorious prejudices, are expounded and aggravated by the unknown voices which bellow in the shade, and swell the echoes of falsehood and of hate. Whilst one denounces to his hundred thousand readers "the beatified aberrations and ignorance of monkish asceticism," [2] others repeat, in emulation, that "the monks and the nuns are but sluggards, fattened at the expense of the people." [3] This is said and resaid every day

[1] Autograph letter to Lanthenas, 30th June 1790. Three years later, the representative Andrew Dumont wrote as follows to the Convention of the department of Somme, where he was on a mission:—"Citizen colleagues, new captures! certain infamous bigots of priests lived in a heap of hay in the ci-devant Abbey of Gard; their long beards proved how inveterate was their aristocracy. These three evil creatures, these monks, have been discovered. . . . These three monsters have gone to the dungeon to await their sentence." Le Gard was an abbey of the order of Citeaux, in Picardy, between Amiens and Abbeville, situated on the Somme.

[2] M. DE LAMARTINE, *Histoire de la Restauration*, livre XV. § 8.

[3] *Le Semeur*, philosophical and literary journal, 13th October 1847. Let us recall, in connection with this subject, that, in his *Manuel de Droit Public Ecclésiastique Français*, published in 1844, p. 209, M. Dupin, then Attorney-General of the Court of Cassation, has attempted to employ as a weapon against the religious congregations and associations not recognised by the modern law, the suit instituted against what he calls the *Religious Congregation* of Bacchanals at Rome, in the year 186 before Jesus Christ, which was, according to the epitome of book 39th of Livy, quoted by the learned jurisconsult, *scelerum omnium seminarium*. In a debate in the French Senate in May 1860, he has not blushed to repeat this contemptible parallel.

in spite of the many monuments, old and new, of historical science, which prove beyond refutation how generally the people have been fattened at the expense of the monks.

These commonplaces of ignorant and triumphant wickedness have taken their place as a final judgment in the mind of the crowd. All obsolete and repugnant as they are, let us listen to them and recall them, if it were only to confirm ourselves in a horror of falsehood and injustice.

Let us take up, in the first place, at the head of these slanders of misled reason, the grand reproach for which it will shortly begin to blush, but which the sophists of the last two centuries employed with so much success to diminish the credit of the monks with statesmen. They were vowed to celibacy, and celibacy put a troublesome limit to the progress of population. This was then the most universal and incontestable of their crimes.[1] We know what has become of that reproach nowadays. It is almost as if God had waited till the lie had achieved its triumph, to overwhelm it with confusion. That population which the religious orders were accused of stemming up in its source, has become too often the most cruel of embarrassments, and the world is covered with doctors and economists, licensed to seek the best means of arresting its progress.

Who does not know to what monstrous consequences the heirs of these accusers of monastic celibacy have come? There is here an abyss of error and of darkness which it is not our business to fathom, but into which, at least, we do not fear to follow that illustrious archbishop, who has sealed by martyrdom the constant moderation of his opinions, and the noble independence of his life. "An antichristian science," said M. Affre, "had encouraged an unlimited

[1] This reproach goes very far back. Colbert, in his memoir of the 15th May 1665, says to Louis XIV.: "The monks and nuns not only hold themselves relieved from work which would advance the common good, but even deprive the public of all the children whom they might produce, to serve in necessary and useful duties."—*Revue Rétrospective*, 2d series, t. iv. pp. 257, 258.

development of population. Overwhelmed now by this novel increase, she sets herself to calculate how much misery and oppression is necessary to restrain it. All other barriers proving too feeble, science has conceived a moral restraint as favourable to vice, as Christian continence is favourable to virtue. Never cease to contemplate these deplorable errors which God has permitted in order to render your faith more dear and venerable to you. St. Paul has said to a small number of the elect, 'In that which concerns virgins I give you only advice.' Heavenly souls, sufficiently courageous to follow him, have been blessed by Jesus Christ: but the Saviour required to add, 'Far from all being able to raise themselves to that perfection, all are not even able to comprehend it.' The Church authorises none to embrace it but after long and severe trials. A science, altogether material, announces to men that this voluntary chastity was a crime against society, because it deprived the state of citizens. In vain innumerable virgins, angels of innocence and goodness, have consoled the poor, have formed the Christian life in the mind of childhood, have appeased Heaven by their prayers and by their touching expiations, and have offered sublime examples to all; in vain legions of virgin apostles have bestowed new sentiments of peace and charity upon the Catholic nations, and brought unknown virtues to life in their bosom; an impure philosophy comes to proclaim that these sacred ties, the source of so many benefits, must be replaced by bonds less perfect; and now she says to the beings whom she has freed from all moral laws, intoxicated with sensual sensations and heaped together in one place, without distinction of sex, Thou shalt not form a family. She says this precisely to those whose passions she has rendered most precocious, and to whom a legitimate union is most necessary for resisting seductions which might pervert angels.

"We scarcely dare to point out to you a maxim still more perverse. Other sophists have comprehended the

impossibility of such a restraint; but in giving that up, they have dared to counsel Christian spouses to cheat the desire of nature, and to throw back into nothingness those beings whom God calls to existence.

"Oh, Saviour God! who hast sanctified the love of marriage by bestowing on it indissolubility, unity, and primitive purity, I bless Thee. I bless Thee, also, for having consecrated the vows of virgins, and filled with grace a life which raises itself above the earth, only to draw down the blessings of Heaven. I bless Thee for having found even in the outrages of an impious philosophy the justification of Thy holy Gospel. Since she has disclosed her infamous doctrines, Thou art avenged but too completely of her blasphemies against Thy angelic counsels."[1]

However, in the eyes of modern authorities the monks were not only guilty of abstracting themselves from the *duty of reproduction*, and of refusing to give life to others; their own life was useless to the world and their kind.

At this present time, and in view of the results, each more unlooked for than the other, of recent historical studies, there is not one, perhaps, among men who pretend to any authority whatever in the realm of knowledge, who would put his name to such an assertion. But we know too well how it is still repeated in the lower classes of literature; it counts for something in that false coin of knowledge which is current among the immense majority of the so-called enlightened men of our days. We send back these blind sages, with confidence, to the study of the monuments which they ignore, of the books which they have never opened. We defy them to find a country, an age, or a society, in which the direct and positive practical utility of the monks has not been written in incontestable lines, as long as their hands were free, and before the *commende* (which was the crime of kings, not of monks) had come to

[1] *Instruction Pastorale de Mgr. l'Archevêque de Paris* (Mgr. Denis Affre), upon the connection of charity with faith; March 1843.

perpetuate enervation and disorder in their ranks. We say nothing further here of the supreme utility, in the eyes of every consistent Christian, of prayer, and a life hidden in God; nothing of that powerful and constant intercession, always hovering between heaven and earth, for the salvation and the peace of men; nothing of the immense and beneficent influence of monastic peace upon men of war and of business, of its virtue upon the passions, of its solitude upon the age. No, we descend from that sphere of too lofty reality to place ourselves on a level with those who keep their eyes always cast down towards the earth, always absorbed in whatever is to pass away or to bring profit. We invite them to instance in the annals of the world, a body, an institution, any organisation whatever, which can bear even a distant comparison with the monasteries which were, for ten centuries and more, the schools, the archives, the libraries, the hostelries, the studios, the penitentiaries, and the hospitals of Christian society. And when they refer us to those times, in which the religious orders estranged themselves almost entirely from the political, literary, and external life of the world, and which, for the very reason that they were thus concentrated more and more in themselves, should have drawn to them the indulgent toleration of the masters of the new world, we answer with the great writer, who, upon so many points, has reopened to us the gates of historic truth: "Whoever is able to subdue human will without degrading human nature, has rendered to society a service beyond price, in freeing government from the care of watching over these men, of employing them, and, above all, of paying them. There has never been a happier idea than that of uniting pacific citizens, who laboured, prayed, studied, wrote, cultivated the ground, *and asked nothing from those in authority.*"[1]

Modern governments ought to comprehend this, although none have yet confessed it; and to those who assure them

[1] COUNT DE MAISTRE, *Du Pape*, p. 436.

that the modest and peaceable independence of the monk, and that satisfaction with his lot, which it will soon be impossible to find, are the fruits of superstition and fanaticism, more than one statesman might be tempted to respond: Restore us this tree which bears fruits of such a lost species!

"The whole aim of man is to be happy," says Bossuet; "place happiness where it ought to be, and it is the source of all good; but the source of all evil is to place it where it ought not to be." But, here are myriads of men, who, from age to age, succeed each other in declaring themselves happy and content with their lot. And we proclaim them useless! As if the world could have anything more useful than happiness; as if universal happiness was not exclusively composed of that of individuals; as if each individual who calls and believes himself happy, and who is so, without taking anything from his neighbour, or envying any man, whoever he may be, was not in himself alone an inappreciable element of social prosperity! No matter, all this happiness must disappear; it must be proscribed and sacrificed; it must be extended upon the Procrustean bed of a pretended public utility, defined, modified, travestied by emulous theorists, as pitiless as they are powerless, but insane enough to believe themselves invested with the right of constraining human nature, and of exercising sovereign rule over the vocations, the inclinations, and the preferences of their fellow-creatures. Be it well understood, besides, that this insupportable tyranny applies itself only to good, never to evil; and that it imposes upon virtue, upon prayer, upon holy retirement, such a yoke and fetters as no enlightened legislator has ever dreamt of imposing upon vice, idleness, or dissipation.

But they persist, and add, The monks were indolent. Is it so indeed! Such, then, was the vice of those men who, by unanimous admission, have with their own hands cleared the soil of half the Western world, and whose

laborious vigils have preserved to us all the works of ancient literature and the monuments of ten centuries of our history. The monks indolent! But of all the monks, the most ancient and the most numerous were the Benedictines; and that name has become, even in vulgar speech, the type and the synonym of serious, modest, and indefatigable labour. The monks indolent! But who, then, if not the monks, have borne the burden and heat of the day in all the missions to the East and to America, in the persecuted Christendoms of Europe, in the work of redeeming captives, in the strife against heresies and immorality, and even in the spiritual administration of the most Catholic nations? It would be well to see those who have been most lavish of this reproach upon the monks, confined for a single day to that life of incessant fatigue, of disgusts, of privations, of vigils, and journeys, which is the portion of the least of the missionaries or the most obscure of the confessors which the monastic orders furnish to the Church!

The indolence of the monks! Can it be possible that this refers to those monks, few in number, who devote themselves exclusively to a life of contemplation?—to the anchorites, these emulators of the Fathers of the desert, who, having learnt to content themselves with necessaries more scanty even than those required by the most miserable labourer, certainly believe themselves entitled to give to their soul the time, strength, and nourishment, of which, by a superhuman courage, they have deprived their flesh?

We have already answered, that for every Christian, prayer is the most legitimate and useful labour; to contest that truth is not simply to deny the principles of the Monastic Order, but the fundamental basis of religion altogether. We shall add that always, and everywhere, the cenobites who have been most faithful to the rules of mortification and to the spiritual life, are precisely those who, like the Trappists of our own day, have obtained the most marvellous results in agriculture, or, like the Jesuits, are

the most devoted to education, to the sciences, and to all mental labours.

The reproach of indolence can then be addressed, with an appearance of justice, only to those among the monks—Benedictines or others—who, having inherited the possessions with which the industry of their predecessors or the generosity of the faithful had endowed their monasteries, lived there in ease and leisure.

We must indeed admit that, especially in the later times, their primitive strength being lamentably lessened by the abuses of the *commende* (which shall be discussed further on without reserve), indolence did glide into more than one monastery. But that was a crime which should be laid to their charge before God, and not before men. Besides, such a reproach cannot be raised without re-descending with all its weight upon its authors, nor even without menacing the entire mass of civil society. Have all these severe critics examined themselves on this score? Are they all confident of escaping the accusation which they lavish upon others? The politicians, the philosophers, the men of letters, who declaim against the idleness of the monks, are they always such laborious and productive citizens? Have not they too already beheld, in tumult beneath them, a greedy crowd which throws upon them in their turn the epithet of idle? What right has the world to account their fortune and their leisure a crime to the monks more than to all the other rich and free proprietors of our age or of any age? Whatever the abuses of the Monastic Order might be—and again we repeat that we shall conceal none of them—they were specially responsible for them towards the Church. They could, without much fear, defy the lay society of all ages to show many rich men more active and more usefully occupied than they. Up to the time of our recent Socialist follies, the world has not assumed the right of demanding from him who reaps the harvests of a field long laboured and fertilised, the same energy as was necessary

to him who first brought it under cultivation. On the contrary, all societies and legislatures have endeavoured to stimulate human activity by promising to parents that their industry, sweat, and fatigue, should result in the leisure, ease, and wellbeing of their offspring. It is by this means alone that the desire and pursuit of property is free from the charge of selfishness. By what right do we apply a different rule to the monks? The peace and comfort which they enjoyed even in the midst of their spiritual decadence was the product of the labours and sweat of their spiritual ancestors—the most legitimate and unassailable inheritance that ever existed. The Church alone could and ought to stigmatise here that capital sin which religion everywhere interdicts. We say without fear that this, which is called *indolence* among the monks, is simply that which is called *leisure* among the wealthy; society has no more right to punish one than the other with civil death and the confiscation of his goods.

But further, we are told, the monks were not only rich —they were too rich! Yes, certainly, there were communities of extreme opulence, and this was one great cause of decay and corruption: I admit it freely. The Church, remaining faithful to the intentions of the founders, had there a legitimate cause of intervention for the better division and more useful employment of monastic wealth. But was this a reason for its appropriation to the profit of the State? No, a thousand times, no! And who can venture to raise such a complaint from the midst of modern society, in which wealth, henceforward to be the only distinction and sole evidence of social importance, has naturally become the object of covetousness less restrained, and more rapacious desire than at any other epoch? Too rich! but what human authority is entitled to fix the limit at which excessive wealth commences, or to trace boundaries to property legitimately acquired? It is religion alone which can distinguish here the necessary from the superfluous, and determine on a fit

destination for that superfluity; and yet, by a revolting wickedness, it is against herself only, against the sacred weakness of the Church, that men have systematically violated the rights of property. The Church alone had a right to say that the monks had too much wealth; we can say only that they were rich,[1] and we can justify their fortune in two words, by its origin and its employment.

As for its employment, even in the midst of the most palpable abuses and complete enervation, that can still be concentrated in one word, charity!—a charity which has never been questioned and never equalled. Upon this point, before refuting the objectors, let us wait for what they advance.

But this fortune is specially justified by its origin. We can affirm, without fear, that never property had an origin as legitimate, as holy, and as inviolable as the monastic possessions. They proceeded entirely from the generosity of the faithful, fructified by the labour of the monks. It is the only property, taken altogether, which has had its

[1] Further, to be just, much that has been said of the wealth of religious orders in general should be corrected. The greater majority of these orders, at the time of their suppression, were, on the contrary, poor: the *mendicant* orders, the most numerous of all, lived, as their name indicates, by alms and endowments limited enough. The regular clergy, such as the Théatins, Barnabites, &c., founded since the sixteenth century, and the secular congregations, had scarcely any territorial endowments. There were none truly rich but the ancient orders of monks, properly so called, such as the Benedictines and Cistercians; and even among these there were monasteries extremely poor from the first, and impoverished, especially by the *commende*. In the bosom of these same orders the reformed congregations signalised themselves by the honourable moderation of their incomes. After the inquiry into the property of the congregation of St. Maur, made in 1862 by the famous lieutenant-general of police La Reynie, every Benedictine returned the income of 437 livres and some sous; this was still less than the modest 600 livres to which we have remarked every Jesuit confined himself. There is not at this time an undergraduate or unmarried supernumerary who does not claim from Government and society a salary two or three times greater.

origin in the most noble act of man; the gift, the pure and free gift of love, gratitude, or faith.[1]

"Can it chance to be," says a celebrated statesman of our days, little suspected of partiality or complaisance for the religious orders—"can it chance to be that you intend to regulate the employment of my goods to such an extent that I shall not be able to use them in the manner most agreeable to me? After having accorded to me the physical enjoyment of property, is it possible that you can refuse me the moral enjoyments, the most noble, the most exquisite, the most useful of all? What then! odious legislator, you will permit me to consume, to dissipate, to destroy my possessions, but you will not permit me to bestow them on whom I please! For me, for myself alone, see the melancholy end which you assign to the painful efforts of my life! Thus you would debase, you would disenchant, you would arrest my labours. . . . To give is the noblest mode of using property. It is, I repeat, the moral enjoyment added to the physical."[2]

[1] Unjust donations, injurious or excessive, might sometimes occur, but nothing is more rare; we could not quote one example out of a thousand. Sometimes, indeed, the heirs, whose consent was always requisite in the Middle Ages for the validity of donations which concerned territorial domains, refused their compliance: and this opposition involved the nullity of the act.

[2] He adds—"For the rest, judge of the fact by the consequences. I said to you elsewhere, that if every man threw himself upon his neighbour to rob him of his food, which the latter replaced at the cost of another, society would soon be a mere theatre of pillage instead of work. Suppose, on the contrary, that every man who has much, gave to him who had not enough, the world would become a theatre of benevolence: do not fear, however, that man will go too far in this path, and render his neighbour idle by burdening himself with his work. The benevolence which exists in the heart of man is barely on a level with human miseries, and it is well if incessant discourses on morality and religion succeed in equalling the remedy to the evil, the balm to the wound."—THIERS, *De la Propriété*, book i. c. 8, "That the power of bestowal is one of the necessary rights of property, 1848." The author is so much the less to be suspected that he only sees in monastic life "Christian suicide substituted for Pagan suicide."—Book ii. c. 6.

But the proprietors of old were not moved only by the idea of enjoyment. They believed themselves obliged to protect their property before God and man, purifying it by sacrifice. Christians of all ranks and times have indeed given, and given much to the monasteries; and while they enriched one, they did not cease to nourish and raise up others. That munificence was neither unreflecting nor blind; it was, on the contrary, the fruit of a calculation, but of a calculation most just and noble. The Catholic nations repeated to the monks during twelve centuries, those beautiful and simple words by which, in the baseness of the Lower Empire, St. John the Almoner endowed the two monasteries founded by him at Alexandria. "I shall provide, after God, for the necessities of your bodies: and do you provide for the necessities of my soul." [1] Five hundred years later, at the other extremity of Christian society, it is thus that one of the great feudal chiefs expresses in two lines the motives of feudal munificence—"I, William, Count of Poitou, and Duke of all Aquitaine, transfer from my hand, into the hand of St. Peter of Cluny, this church which, God helping, I have freed and snatched from lay usurpation:—and I make this gift because I remember my sins, and because I would that God might forget them." [2]

In bestowing gifts upon the monks, the Christians of old gave, in the first place, to God, and next to the poor—for we all know that the monks were the almoners of Christianity. They gave up their superfluous wealth, and sometimes even necessaries, in obedience to the two most exalted motives of life—the salvation of the soul and the consolation of the poor—the love of God and the love of man.

[1] "Ego post Deum utilitatem vestram corporalem procurabo, vos autem spiritualis habetote mese curam salutis."—Ap. MABILL., *Præf.* iv. *sæc. Bened.*, n. 66.

[2] "Peccatorum meorum memor, ut Deus fieri dignetur immemor."—*Gallia Christiana*, t. ii. p. 1094. Charter of January 1081.

If we would retrace the history of the most generous instincts and pure emotions which have ever moved the human heart, it could be done with ease; we need only transcribe the preambles of the acts of foundation and donation which have established monastic property.[1] There, all the affections and all the sorrows of man appear in turn to be sanctified, purified, and made immortal; devotion towards God, towards His mother, towards His saints; adoration and humility, repentance and gratitude; love, conjugal, filial, and paternal, the love of one's neighbour in all the inexhaustible variety of its inspirations, and above all, the desire of contributing to the salvation of those who have been beloved on earth, and of rejoining them in heaven. In public and solemn acts, designed to remove all suspicion of fraudulent or occult manœuvres, these generous Christians have enumerated the motives of their sacrifices; they declare themselves to have offered them sometimes for the expiation of a crime,[2] a misfortune, or an accident of which they have been the involuntary cause; sometimes to confirm their renunciation of ill-acquired wealth, of unjust pretensions, or of inveterate enmities; sometimes to thank God for a signal grace, for a danger turned aside, for a happy return from pilgrimage or crusade, or to draw down His protection at the moment of entering the lists;[3] sometimes, and especially to sanctify their wealth and their increase to the best advantage, by making it profitable to the poor and

[1] We shall see in the course of our narrative a thousand proofs of this assertion. I quote in the meantime some few borrowed in part from the excellent researches of HURTER on this same subject, in his *Histoire d'Innocent III.*, t. iii. p. 430 of the German edition.

[2] "Peccatorum nostrorum vulneribus cujusdam medicammis cauteriam adhibere pium statuimus."—Donation of Leopold of Austria, ap. *Mon. Boic.*, iv. 314.

[3] "Milon Balbe, of Til-Chatel, chevalier in 1060, *monomachia certaturus pugna*, recommends himself to the prayers of the monks of Bèze, and gives them his manor near the church of LUX."—DUMAY, *Appendice* of COURTEPÉE, iv. 695.

to travellers.[1] They desired thus to consecrate before the Lord, perhaps, their resignation under an incurable malady[2] —perhaps the foreseen extinction of an ancient and illustrious race[3]—perhaps the desire of repose after a disturbed life—admiration of a picturesque or solitary site—the choice of a family sepulchre[4]—above all, the memory of a long line of ancestors, of a wife faithfully cherished,[5] of a child prematurely taken away, or even of a faithful servant or follower.[6] Sometimes, also, they designed that offering for the salvation of one loved unlawfully and beyond measure, but whom the Church had not forbidden them to cherish beyond the tomb. It was thus that Philip Augustus endowed a convent of a hundred and twenty nuns near the tomb of Agnes de Meranie.

Thus, from every page of these annals of feudal generosity, rises some monument of the mysteries of divine mercy, of human grief, and Christian virtue; and we perceive, besides, how the motives of donation became unceasingly motives of conversion, and how often a man who had commenced by giving to God his lands and possessions, finished by the offering of himself.

[1] "In usum pauperum et peregrinorum."—Ap. DIGBY, x. 636. "Centuplam mercedem a Deo expectantes."—VOGT., *Ined. Monum. Verdens.*, ii. 248.

[2] "Cum ex iniquitate mea devenerim ad morbum incurabilem gratias ago Deo meo."—*Gall. Christ.* Inst. Eccl. Senecens., n. vii., ap. HURT., iii. 456.

[3] "Cum Deus omnipotens fructu ventris nescio quo suo occulto judicio me privasset, mei patrimonii hæredem constituens Crucifixum."—*Chron. Zweltens.*, i. 245.

[4] "Quomodo multi principum et nobilium tubam extremam hic pausando præelegerunt expectari."—A Weingarten: see HESS., *Monum., Guelf.*, p. 197.

[5] "Pro salute Mathildæ, sponsæ meæ."—*Monast. Anglic.*, p. 1034. "In refrigerium animæ suæ et suorum."—LANGEBECK, SS. iv. 355. "Dederunt pro anima matris suæ bona memoriæ."—A Gottesgnade ap. LEUKFELD.

[6] In 1278, thirty livres were bequeathed to the Abbot of Settim and his Cistercian monks, near Florence, by the Countess Beatrice, daughter of Count Rodolf of Capraja, and widow of Count Marcovaldo, "*per l'anima di donna Giuliana, la quale fu mia cameriera.*"—LAMI., *Monum. della Chiese Fiorentino*, i. 75, ap. CANTU, *Storia degl' Italiani.*

The munificence of kings assured the existence of these grand and royal abbeys, such as St. Germain-des-Prés, St. Denys, the Mont-Cassin, Cluny, Canterbury, Westminster, Hautecombe, which served at once for archives, for sanctuary, and for the sepulture of dynasties. Others were regarded as the special patrimony of certain noble races, which, from father to son, they believed themselves obliged to maintain and enrich, and in which each exploit, each alliance, each degree of their genealogy, each death, was commemorated by new gifts. A similar conviction discloses itself, and beams like a luminous torch across all that ocean of munificence which inundated the monastic institutions during the Catholic ages. "Give me," said St. Eloy to his master, "this site, that I may construct there a ladder by which you and I shall mount to the celestial kingdom."[1] Six centuries later, upon the shores of the Baltic, the same thought is reproduced in the same terms—a Count d'Orlamunde, in endowing a monastery in Hamburg, inscribed this axiom upon its charter of foundation: "He who erects or repairs a monastery builds himself a stair to ascend to heaven."[2] And at the same period, one of the chiefs of the Norman nobility, then masters of England, the Count of Chester, saw in a dream his ancestor, who pointed out to him one of his domains, saying: "Here must be erected a ladder by which the angels shall ascend every day to carry men's prayers to God, and descend with His blessings."[3] Enlightened by the infallible light of the Gospel, they perceived that their inheritance, of which they thus despoiled themselves for God, was that which did them most honour

[1] "Hanc mihi, domine mi rex, serenitas tua concedat, quo possim ibi, te tibi et mihi scalam construere, per quam mereamur ad cœlestia regna uterque conscendere."—S. AUDOENI, *Vit. S. Eligii*, l. 15.

[2] "Qui claustra construit vel delapsa reparat cœlum ascensurus scalam sibi facit."—Ap. HURTER, t. iv. p. 450.

[3] "Erigenda est scala per quam descendunt et ascendunt angelorum preces, et vota hominum Deo offerentur et referant gratiam."—*Monast. Anglican.*, t. i. p. 890.

and endured the best. They believe as the Emperor Frederick II. believed, when he wrote at the head of one of his charters this noble thought: "In the midst of the universal decay of human things, man can always snatch from time something that is stable and perpetual—namely, that which he gives to God: he thus links his terrestrial patrimony to the patrimony of God." [1]

But kings and nobles had no monopoly of this inexhaustible liberality. The Christian people, *sancta plebs Dei*, claimed and exercised in their turn the right of giving to God and to the saints, and of mingling their offerings with those of their superiors. The most insignificant gift, coming from the humblest hand, to immortalise the benefit and the benefactor—the offering of the poor, of the serf, of the widow, and of the beggar—was registered in the daily prayer of the monks, and immortalised in their annals, side by side with the magnificent foundations of princes and lords. "Mathilde has given us a vineyard; Barbe, a lay woman, has given a table-cloth; Alaïde has given a calf" [2] —thus we read in the *Necrology of Lorsch*, amidst the evidences of the generosity and grandeur of the Carlovingians. And when Croyland, the principal monastery in England, had been burned down in 1091, and rebuilt, thanks to the gifts of the Norman nobility, the Abbot Ingulph was careful to enter in his *Chronicle*, which is one of the most important historical monuments of the time: "Among so many benefactors, let us not forget the holy memory of Juliana, the beggar of Weston, who, in her misery, gave us all that she could, and all that she had

[1] "Etsi omnia caduca sunt hominum et temporum diuturnitate labuntur, sunt tamen ex hominibus aliqua perpetua stabilitate connexa, illa videlicet, quæ divinis addita cultibus, hæreditatis Dei funiculum inter homines amplectuntur."—PIRRO, *Sicilia Sacra*. Priorat. Messan., p. 1096. Ap. HURTER, iii. 455.

[2] "Mathildis dedit nobis vineam; Barba laica dedit nobis mappam; Alheidis dedit vitulum."—*Necrol. Lauresh.* in SCHANNAT. *Vindict.*, tit. vii. n. 1, ap. HURTER, iii. 477.

—namely, twisted thread to sew the vestments of our monks." [1]

Great and small thus confirm the truth of the definition which a Council has given of the possessions of the Church, and more especially of monastic possessions: "They are the offering of the faithful, the patrimony of the poor, and the ransom of souls."

It is thus, then, that the treasure of the monks has been formed—these are their titles of possession. No family, no state, no individual has ever possessed titles more glorious or more legitimate.

Such is, however, the wickedness and blind perversity of man, unfaithful to the law of salvation, that of all human property, the only one which has been everywhere attacked, everywhere calumniated, and, in our own days, everywhere suppressed, is monastic property! Kingdoms and republics, autocrats and demagogues, you have preserved and consecrated the spoliations of force, the triumphs of speculation; and you have confiscated the fruits of sacrifice, the gifts of repentance, the legacy of grief; you have annihilated the works created by two things which, when they are pure, are the loveliest in the world—freedom and love!

Heaven grant that this crime may not be cruelly punished! Heaven grant that the logic of spoliation may not be carried to its utmost conclusions, and that implacable avengers, improving upon your example, may not appear to envelop innocent and guilty in one common proscription, in the name of those principles which had their first victory in the spoliation of the monastic orders! The sons of those who destroyed the monasteries everywhere, have already learned,

[1] "Nec oblivionem patiatur, inter tot benefactores pauperculæ Julianæ de Westona sancta memoria, quæ dedit nobis de sua inopia totum victum suum, scilicet, filum retortum in summa magna ad consuendum ratrum nostri monasterii vestimenta."—INGULPH. CROYL. Ap. GALE, *Script. Rer. Anglic.*, t. i. p. 99.

to their cost, that of all the arguments which have overthrown monastic property, there is not one which might not batter a breach in general property. This cannot be sufficiently kept in mind: they too, desperate and trembling, have seen men rise before them to demand their goods, throwing at their head that same name of *idlers* with which they had despoiled the monks. Are they at the end of their experiences and chastisements? Does not the storm approach hour by hour, and may we not hear yet once more, surging up to the gates of modern palaces, the tide of that multitude which confounds all property, ancient and modern, in a common reprobation, and whose apostles have declared that leisure was a crime against society, and property a theft?

CHAPTER VII

DECLINE

Le mura, che soleano esser badia,
Fatte sono spelonche, e le cocolle
Sacca son piene di farina ria.

Paradiso, c. xxii.

BUT there is a last and more serious complaint which must be traced without evasion—the corruption of the religious orders. Great disorders and abuses, we are told, reigned among the monks, especially in their last times. So they did. Yes, we confess it. They were given up to laxness and enervation. Again we say, yes. They no longer observed those laws of fervour, of austerity, and of discipline, which were the implicit condition of the liberal gifts with which they had been overwhelmed. In one word, they were in full decline. Yes, it is but too true; save some glorious exceptions—such as the Chartreux, the Trappists, and the Jesuits—the Religious were in decadence at the moment when they were reached by the devastating scythe of the past century and of our own time.

I do not evade this charge. I admit and confirm it. I even dare to believe that there is none among the enemies of the monks who has studied more attentively than myself these disorders and abuses, no one who has dwelt longer upon the dark side of an admirable history. I know these abuses, I confess them; and what is more, I shall narrate them. Yes, if God permits me to continue my work, I shall relate them with unmitigated sincerity, and henceforward in the pages which you are about to read, wherever

occasion presents, I shall show the evil beside the good, the shadow beside the light; I shall say what were the errors, and sometimes the crimes, of the monks, at the risk of surprising and even wounding affections which I respect, and a modesty which is dear to me, because it is necessary to truth, and because I would not have any one suspect of blindness, partiality, or ignorance, my very insufficient apology for these illustrious victims.

I shall relate these abuses. But on whose authority? On that of the monks themselves; for it is most frequently to them alone that we owe the knowledge of these abuses; to their confessions, to their lamentations, to their narratives, to the chronicles of their houses written by themselves with a frankness and simplicity still more admirable than their laborious patience. They were not acquainted with the rule dictated by the prophet of their persecutors: "Lie boldly, lie always." They spoke the entire truth, and to their own cost; they spoke it with sadness, blushing when that was inevitable, but with a legitimate certainty that the evil which they denounced to posterity, very far from being the natural result of their institution, was its direct contradiction, and that to vanquish and dethrone it nothing more was necessary than a return, always possible, to its primitive rule. And I also would, like them, speak the truth, and the entire truth, not only concerning the monks, but even of the Church and her ministers, whensoever it is needful. I shall conceal neither the prevarications nor the weaknesses of those who have failed, that I may feel myself empowered to render a free and pure testimony to those who have fought well, and that I may have the right of stigmatising among the enemies of truth the evil which I shall not spare in her own children and ministers. For by what right could I be severe towards the wicked, if I had not begun by being severe towards those who, charged by God Himself to combat vice, have become its instruments and accomplices?

If I threw a lying veil over the corruption of the religious orders during the last period of their existence, how could I explain to the eyes of Christians, or even of unbelievers, the terrible decree of the Almighty, who has permitted that this long-enduring grandeur should be swept away in a single day, and that the heirs of so many saints and heroes, delivered bound hand and foot to the mortal stroke, should almost everywhere succumb without resistance and without glory?

And again, I do not write a panegyric but a history: I despise these pitiful mutilations of history, dictated by a false and feeble prudence, which have perhaps done as much injury to the good cause as the shameful falsifications of our adversaries. When I meet with such in the books of certain apologists, I seem to hear the remarkable interrogation of the patriarch—"Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for Him?"[1]

Some timid minds will blame me, I know; but I prefer the authority of St. Gregory the Great, who was not less great as a monk than as a pope, and who has written—"It is better to have scandal than a lie."[2] I declare myself of the opinion of the two most illustrious and most zealous champions for the rights of the Church with whom I am acquainted. I say with Cardinal Baronius: "God preserve me from betraying the truth rather than betray the feebleness of some guilty minister of the Roman Church;"[3] and I add with

[1] Job xiii. 7.

[2] "Melius est ut scandalum oriatur, quam ut veritas relinquatur."—S. GREGOR., *Homil.* 7, *in Ezechiel*, quoted by S. BERNARD.

[3] The passage is too fine not to be given entire: "Nos vero nec ejusmodi sumus ut proditione veritatis delinquentem quemlibet Ecclesiæ Romanæ ministrum prodere nolimus, cum nec ipsa sibi hoc vindicat Romana Ecclesia, ut membra sua et latera suo Legatos missos omni carere turpitudine asserat. Non enim Deum æmulatur ut fortior illo sit. Si enim ipse Deus, qui facit Angelos suos spiritus, et ministros suos ignem urentem, tamen in Angelis suis reperit pravitatem, quid præsumet ipsa, . . . cum sciat ipsa non supernos Angelos mittere, sed homines."—*Annales*, add. ann. 1125, c. 12.

the Count de Maistre, "We owe to the popes only truth, and they have no need of anything else." [1]

But, above all, I shall speak that holy and necessary truth when it concerns the monks and their faults, because, as St. Bernard, that great denunciator of the disorders of religious life, has so well said, "It is not against the Monastic Order, but for it, that I contend, when I reprehend the vices of men who make part of it; and I do not fear thus to displease those who love the order—far otherwise, I am sure of pleasing them by pursuing that which they hate." [2]

But let us add also, with a great monk of our own day, "Abuses prove nothing against any institution; and if it is necessary to destroy everything that has been subject to abuse—that is to say, of things which are good in themselves, but corrupted by the liberty of man—God Himself ought to be seized upon His inaccessible throne, where too often we have seated our own passions and errors by His side." [3]

And who shall dare to assert, besides, that these abuses were a natural or necessary consequence of the monastic institution? Good sense and history prove to the contrary; but it is only too well known how little human weakness is compatible with sustained perfection. No human institution has been able to produce results always excellent; but the most numerous and purest of such have been produced by the monastic orders. So much for the institution, and all that naturally proceeds from it. Abuses and disorders proceed only from that natural depravity of man which follows and finds him out everywhere. There is not a single accusation made against the religious orders, which may not be imputed with as much or more reason to all human

[1] *Du Pape*, lib. ii. c. 13.

[2] "Non adversus ordinem, sed pro ordine disputandus ero. Quin imo gratum procul dubio accepturi sunt, si persequimur quod et ipsi oderunt." —*Apologia ad Guillelm.*, c. 7.

[3] LACORDAIRE, *Discours sur les Etudes Philosophiques*, August 10, 1859.

institutions, even the most august. What do I say? there is not one which may not penetrate direct to the Church herself and entire Christianity. Yes, the Church, although of divine institution, has too often seen her purity tarnished among her children as among her pontiffs by crying abuses and monstrous disorders. Jesus Christ has promised to the Church that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her; but not that He should exempt her ministers from human weakness. God delivers no man from the responsibility of free-will; He has left a power of choice, between good and evil, even to the angels, in order to ensure the glorious liberty of well-doing, and to endow His creatures with the right of meriting the happiness He offers them. And when we reproach the monks with having degenerated from their primitive fervour, and no longer resembling their founders, we forget that most modern Christians have still less resemblance to the Christians of the primitive Church. This remark was made by Erasmus three centuries since,[1] and has lost none of its truth. This is certain, that at all ages, even those which have most detracted from the renown and dignity of the Church and monastic orders, the primitive honour of those great institutions remained intact, since all the scandals with which they were reproached proceeded exclusively from the violation of their own rules and the decline of their original spirit. It is not less incontestable that till their last days they continued to produce a certain number of holy souls and great minds, worthy of the everlasting admiration and gratitude of Christians.

Voltaire himself made the same admission,[2] in speaking

[1] "Quænam igitur est animi perversitas odisse monachum ob hoc ipsum quod monachus est? Profiteris te Christianum et adversaris eis qui Christo simillimi sunt? Hic protinus occinent, scio plerosque plurimum abesse ab hac imagine priscorum monachorum. At quotiesquisque est Christianorum, qui primitivæ Ecclesiæ sanctimoniam hactenus retinuerit? Nullum igitur vitæ genus probabimus, si propter malos oderimus et bonos."—ERASMI *Epist. ad Johan. Einstad. Carthusian.*

[2] "There is still scarcely a monastery which does not contain admirable

of the eighteenth century. He knew it well; and when he was compelled to do justice to religion, we may well believe him.

Having said this, and very far from wishing to justify, or even to excuse, the degenerate monks who were contemporaries of Erasmus and Voltaire, we approach at once to the dark side of our subject, which, besides, we shall encounter more or less during the whole course of our researches.

Pointed out and stigmatised from the origin of the monastic institution by those saints and doctors who were its most ardent apologists, by Chrysostom as by Augustin —combated, pursued, and repressed by the authors of all the rules and of all reforms, from St. Benedict to St. Bernard,—these abuses and scandals periodically renewed themselves, like the heads of the hydra, sometimes under new appearances, but always grafted upon the old stock of perversity and corruption which is found in all consciences, and in every human society. Ten centuries passed without wearing out the perseverance, the courage, the austere and fertile genius, of the reformers, whose labours we shall relate. The modest and silent virtue of the great majority of monks counterbalanced the exceptional abuses, and continued to merit the admiration of men and the clemency of God. But there came a time when the abuses overpowered the law, when the exceptions eclipsed the rule, and when the triumph of evil seemed irreparable. At the end of the fourteenth century, the flame which St. Bernard had rekindled everywhere in aid of the Cistercian institution

souls who do honour to human nature. Too many writers take pleasure in searching out the disorders and vices by which those sanctuaries of piety were sometimes profaned. *It is certain that secular life has always been more vicious*, and that great crimes have not been committed in monasteries; but they have been more remarked by their contrast to the rule; no state has always been pure."—*Essai sur les Mœurs*, c. 139. See also the remarkable confession of the Anglican MAITLAND, *The Dark Ages*, Preface, p. 11.

having languished, the breath from on high, the true inspiration of the monk, seemed to abandon the old orders, that it might give life to the mendicant orders, and, after these had perished, to the great congregations, which, up to our own times, have been the honour and consolation of the Church.

The great Benedictine order, with its immense property, its vast patronage, its magnificent monuments, and the position which it had acquired amidst all the movements and interests of the social and political world, remained notwithstanding one of the greatest institutions of Christendom. Many partial, local, even national reforms,[1] which arrested the course of evil, and retarded its decline, rose from time to time in its own bosom. But no universal, general, sustained, and sovereign effort was attempted. Some branches alone blossomed for a time, and seemed to promise an abundant and immortal growth: however, the old trunk continued tainted at heart, and wasted by an internal decay, which became rapidly more and more apparent, and was a permanent subject of scandal and reproach among good men as well as among the wicked.

Whilst the pure and generous indignation of Dante breathed forth in those memorable lines which he places in the mouth of St. Benedict himself,[2] invectives more frivolous, founded upon accusations more precise and dangerous, came to light in the novels of Boccaccio, and of all those imitators who, after him, infected Italian literature with their weak libertinage. We find such in all the songs of the feudal or popular poets of the Western kingdoms.[3] Monastic corruption became the commonplace of satire, whilst at the same time it was the constant subject of too just lamentation to all pious souls, as well as to all the high authorities of the Church.

[1] For example, those of Bursfield, in Westphalia; St. Justina, at Padua; St. Maur, St. Hidulphe, and St. Vanne, in France; La Trappe, &c.

[2] *Paradiso*, c. xxii. See the motto of this chapter.

[3] Among a thousand examples which might be quoted, I have chosen the portrait of the prior who went on a pilgrimage to St. Thomas of Can-

"For many ages," says Bossuet, in the first page of the best book which has ever been written against Protestantism —"for many ages the reformation of ecclesiastical discipline has been desirable."[1] By confession of all, that reformation, "desired by the people, the doctors, the Catholic prelates,

terbury, as painted by Chaucer, the father of English poetry, in the fourteenth century (*Prologue of the Canterbury Tales*, 173–207):—

"The reule of seint Maure and of seint Benelt,
Because that it was olde and somdele streit,
This ilke monk lette olde thinges pace,
And held after the newe world the trace.
He yave not of the text a pulled hen,
That saith, that hunters ben not holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is rekkeles,
Is like to a fish that is waterles;
This is to say, a monk out of his cloistre.
This ilke text held he not worth an oistre.
And I say his opinion was good.
What shulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Upon a book in cloistre always to pore,
Or swinken with his hondes, and laboure,
As Austin bit? how shal the world be served?
Let Austin have his swink to him reserved.
Therfore he was a prickasoure a right:
Grehoundes he hadde as swift as foul of flight:
Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saw his sleves purfiled at the hond
With gris, and that the finest of the lond.
And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,
He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pinne:
A love-knotte in the greter end ther was.
His hed was balled, and shone as any glas,
And eke his face, as it hadde ben anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point.
His eyen stepe, and rolling in his hed,
That stemed as a forneis of a led.
His botes souple, his hors in gret estat,
Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.
He was not pale as a forpined gost.
A fat swan loved he best of any rost.
His palfrey was as broune as is a bery."

[1] *Histoire des Variations*, liv. i. c. 1.

and unhappily evaded,"[1] should have first been brought to bear upon the religious orders.

Many of the monasteries excited envy and scandal by their excessive opulence. This opulence, produced by the generous efforts and painful labours of their first inhabitants, was no longer justified by the sight of the personal toil of the monks in the cultivation of their domains, a work which was now left to the peasants. Without depriving its legitimate possessors of this wealth, it might easily have been turned into other channels, not less profitable to the Church and to the poor, instead of allowing it to engender that idleness, and those other irregularities still more shameful, which were its inevitable consequence.

Whilst the fundamental laws of the institution, in the midst of this moral ruin and material prosperity, suffered the gravest alterations, the bishops were grieved to see the ties of ecclesiastical discipline and authority put to scorn by the abuse of exemptions. These privileges, specially legitimate and necessary at the origin of the great monastic foundations, had become, by the progress of time and the blind indulgence with which they were lavished, a useless, dangerous, and sometimes even ridiculous anomaly. St. Bernard had already employed some of the boldest accents of his impetuous eloquence[2] to mark out this abuse, which diminished without disappearing under the blow of the solemn condemnation of the Council of Trent.[3]

[1] *Histoire des Variations*, liv. i. c. 1.—He says elsewhere, with the noble candour which adds so great a charm and authority to his genius, "The prodigious revolt of Lutheranism has been a visible punishment of the enervation of the clergy. . . . God has visited upon our fathers, as He continues to visit upon us, all the laxness of past centuries, beginning with the earliest times, in which evil customs, contrary to the rule, began to prevail. . . . Let us take heed, all of us who are superiors. . . . We must bear the penalty for all the scorned canons, all the abuses authorised by our example."—*Meditations sur l'Evangile*, 64th day.

[2] "Non est bona arbor faciens fructus tales, insolentias, dissolutiones, dilapidationes, simultates, scandala, odia."—*De Consider.*, lib. iii. c. 4.—Cf. *Tract. de Morib. et Officio Episc.*, c. 9.

[3] "Quoniam privilegia et exemptiones, quæ variis titulis plerisque con-

Unhappily that great and holy assembly, ill seconded, and struck with impotence besides by the ill-will of princes, could not bring an efficacious or durable remedy to the abuses, truly fatal and revolting, of the *commende*. The Fathers of the Council poured forth on this subject prayers which were not granted, and decreed prohibitions none of which were carried out.[1]

We shall see hereafter the origin and special nature of this scourge, which was contemporary with the earliest times of the institution, but which, more or less restrained[2] during the middle ages, only attained in the sixteenth century to those shameful and formidable proportions which have made it the leprosy of the Monastic Order. Let us only say here that the result of this *commende* was to bestow the title of abbot, with the greater part of the revenues of a monastery, upon ecclesiastics who were strangers to monastic life, and too often even upon simple laymen, provided they were not married. It inflicted thus a deep and radical taint to these institutions, and wherever Protestantism had not succeeded in battering them down violently, it inoculated them with a disgraceful and deadly poison.

Subsequent to the Reformation, Catholic Germany was

ceduntur, hodie perturbationem in episcoporum jurisdictione excitare, et exemptis occasionem laxioris vitæ præbere dignoscuntur."—*Sess.* xxiv., *De Reformat.*, c. 11.—Cf. *Sess.* vi. c. 3.

[1] *Sessio* xxi., *De Reformat.*, c. 8.—*Sessio* xxv., *De Regul. et Monial.*, c. 20 and 21.—We quote only this last text: "Sancta Synodus . . . confidit SS. Romanum pontificem pro sua pietate et prudentia curaturum, quantum hæc tempora ferre posse viderit, ut iis (monasteriis) quæ nunc commendata reperiuntur, et quæ suos conventus habent, regulares personæ, ejusdem ordinis expresse professæ, et quæ gregi præire et præesse possunt, præficiantur. Quæ vero in posterum vacabunt, non nisi regularibus spectatæ virtutis et sanctitatis conferantur."

[2] Clement V. and Innocent VI. distinguished themselves among all the popes by the revocation of all *commendes* anterior to their pontificates. But the evil revived incessantly. Neither the Council of Basle nor the Pragmatic Sanction discussed it.—THOMASSIN, *Vetus et Nova Disciplina de Beneficiis*, part ii. lib. iii. c. 19 and 20.

happy enough to get rid of this incubus. Belgium, thanks to her ancient political freedom, could impose even upon her most powerful sovereigns, such as Charles V. and Philip II., the obligation of preserving her from that ignominy.[1] Italy was less happy: Mont-Cassin, the cradle and home of the Benedictine order, suffered the disgrace of being included amongst the *sixteen* abbeys, with which the son of the Medicis, afterwards Leo X., was provided from his cradle as with so many baubles. There too the ancient and illustrious Abbey of Farfa was bestowed about 1530 upon one Napoleon Orsini, who made it the headquarters of a band of brigands, and who, at their head, ravaged all Central Italy, up to the time when he was killed in the attempt to carry off his own sister from her bridegroom.[2] I grieve to say that similar incidents appear in too many pages of the history of those tempestuous times.

But it was specially in France, after the concordat of Leo X. with Francis I., that this evil attained its utmost limits. This concordat gave to the king the right of nominating to all the abbeys and conventual priories of the kingdom. It certainly warned him to confer these benefices only on the Religious, but that condition was invariably eluded or violated. The individuals invested by the king with these benefices, without any intervention of the community whose revenues they were about to devour, had only to make interest with the Pope, who despatched to them the bulls of their new dignity, surrogating them to the rights of the elective and regular abbots of former times, and reserving to a cloistral prior the spiritual administration of the monastery thus despoiled of its most precious rights. This

[1] The article 57 of the *Joyeuse Entrée* of Brabant, to which Charles V. and Philip II. were obliged to swear, as the Dukes of Burgundy had sworn, and which was only abolished by Joseph II., declares: "The sovereign shall not give in any manner, nor allow to be given, in *commende*, any abbey, prelacy, or dignity of Brabant."

[2] CANTU, *Storia degli Italiani*, t. v.

frightful state of things lasted till the Revolution. For the partial irregularities which, especially in houses not directly subject to the influence of the great feudal families, had followed elections, the direct nomination of the kings, established by the concordat of 1516, substituted a criminal, radical, and incurable disorder. The title of abbot, borne and distinguished by so many saints, so many doctors, so many illustrious pontiffs, fell into the mire. Neither residence nor any of the duties of the religious life were any longer compulsory. It was nothing more than a lucrative sinecure, which the Crown disposed of at its pleasure, or at the pleasure of its ministers, and too often to the profit of the most unworthy passions or interests. In vain did the permanent scandal of these monasteries deprived of their natural heads, and farmed by strangers who only appeared among them to grind down the inhabitants, call forth their unanimous and frequent complaints; in vain did the estates of Blois and Paris, like most of the political and religious assemblies of the sixteenth century, petition for the restoration of ancient discipline: all was useless. The evil grew more and more aggravated. The very idea of the pious and charitable destination of these glorious creations of the faith of our fathers, was soon obliterated from the minds of those who thus disposed of the treasures of the past, as well as of those who were nourished by them. This magnificent patrimony of faith and charity, created and augmented by the ages, and consecrated by its originators expressly to the maintenance of a life regular and in common, and to the help of the poor, was thus transformed into a fiscal reserve attached to the royal treasury, which the hand of the sovereigns exhausted at will in the endeavour to satisfy the rapacity of their courtiers, or, as has been said, to *gorge* and to *enslave* their nobility.

My readers, I venture to say, cannot be more sad and distressed than I am, to see myself condemned to relate

how abbeys, the most ancient and illustrious in the annals of the country and the Church, have served as appanages to the bastards of kings or to their most unworthy favourites [1] —and even sometimes as the price of the disgraceful favours of a royal mistress.[2] Later, and during the course of our civil discords after the League and the Fronde, they were the object of an avowed and revolting traffic, and formed the common money of all markets in the negotiations of the times.[3] And at length, when absolute monarchy had triumphed over all resistance, these great and celebrated houses fell most frequently a prey to ministers who had nothing of the ecclesiastic but his robe; after having gratified the ambition of Richelieu [4] and the cupidity of Mazarin,

[1] Charles of Valois, Duke of Angoulême, bastard of Charles IX. and Marie Touchet, was commendatory abbot of the Chaise-Dieu at the age of thirteen, and still drew the revenues of it in 1599, although long married. The Abbey of Bourgueil, in the diocese of Angers, had been given to Bussy d'Amboise, the favourite of the brother of Henry III., the worst subject of his time, who was assassinated by the Count de Montsoreau, 19th August 1579. In the Journal of P. de l'Estoile he is always styled Abbot of Bourgueil.

[2] Henry IV. assigned in 1601 to Corisande d'Andouin, Countess of Guiche, the revenues of the Abbey of Châtillon, where St. Bernard was educated (COURTÉPÉE, *Descript. Hist. de la Bourgogne*, t. vi. p. 375). We have a letter from him in three lines, where he gives an abbey to Rosny —the Protestant Rosny—and asks of him at the same time 50,000 crowns for his mistress, Mlle. d'Entraigues, "portion du prix de sa prétendue virginité," says M. Berger de Xivrey.—*Recueil des Lettres Missives de Henri IV.*, t. v. p. 179.

[3] There was sold in 1858 at Paris an autograph letter of the Duchess of Montbazon, who wrote to Mazarin to stipulate that her daughter should have an abbey at the time of the approaching peace. "*Sy celle de Caen venoit à vaquer ou tout ostre* (sic) *bonne, je vous la demande.*"

[4] He endowed himself with the *commende* of Citeaux, of Cluny, and almost all the great abbeys of France, and this in spite of the express prohibition of the Council of Trent, which had interdicted abbeys, heads of orders, from being put in *commende* (*Sess.* xxiv. c. 21). He only followed in this the example of the famous Cardinal of Lorraine in the preceding century, and of the Cardinal of Châtillon, brother of Coligny, who had thirteen abbeys in *commende* up to the time when he married, declaring himself a Protestant.

they went to swell the cynical opulence of the Abbé Dubois [1] and of the Abbé Terray.[2]

It was perhaps for lesser treasons that the angel of the justice of the Lord pronounced against one of the communities of the primitive Church the formidable sentence—"Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead!" [3]

Let us imagine to ourselves what could become, in most of these monasteries, despoiled of their most essential prerogatives, of the true motives of their existence, and metamorphosed into farms belonging to strangers, of some five or six unhappy monks, abandoned to themselves and overwhelmed under the weight of their past glory and their present debasement! Can we wonder at the progress of corruption, of spiritual and intellectual decline? What were they else but so many isolated detachments of soldiers, forgotten by their army, without leader and without discipline, who found themselves thus naturally exposed and almost condemned to all the temptations of idleness? [4]

Life ebbed away from them, little by little—not only religious life, but life of every kind. In spite of the attractions which an existence easy and rich, almost without care and mortifications, offered to vulgar souls, a sufficient number

[1] Dubois was titular of the seven Abbeys of Nogent, St. Just, Airvaulx Bourgueil, Bergues-St.-Vinox, St. Bertin, and Cercamp, the united incomes of which amounted to 204,000 livres.—ST. SIMON, *Mémoires*, ch. 608, ed. Delloye.

[2] This controller-general enjoyed the Abbeys of Molesmes and Troarn; the former had been the cradle of the order of Citeaux, and the latter was founded by the Norman dukes of the eleventh century. The one was valued at 31,000 livres of income, and the other at 80,000. The journal of the advocate Barbier, v. ii., discloses the scandalous use which was made of the revenues of the glorious Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés by its last commendatory abbot, the Count of Clermont, a prince of the blood, otherwise brilliant and intrepid in war, as became a Bourbon.

[3] Rev. iii. 1.

[4] Of the many thousand monasteries founded in France during thirteen centuries, there remained, in 1789, only one hundred and twenty which were *en règle*; that is to say, who retained the right to elect their abbot and dispose of their incomes.

of monks could not be found to people these dishonoured sanctuaries. Let us well observe, to the honour of human nature as of Christianity and religious life, that the corrupt orders were always barren. The world would have none of them, as God would not. Like God, the world addressed them in these words: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

It was in vain that, to fill up these vacancies, they had recourse to another abuse, to which the Church has too often closed her eyes. Forced vocations, that too legitimate cause of ruin and unpopularity to the religious orders, dates back, like the *commende*, to a far-distant age. They were made subservient to political purposes under the Merovingians and Carlovingians, as the well-known fate of Clodoald and Tassilon testifies. But in the middle ages, during the highest period of monastic fervour, we can scarcely find any trace of them. They reappear at these epochs of decadence and corruption, in which the self-love and cupidity of families too often found in the ecclesiastical superiors accomplices all the more docile, as they were themselves strangers to the true conditions of cloistral life. That modern tyranny which has produced the revolutionary spirit, and which proscribes the vow, was then preceded and represented by a tyranny which, with an equal disdain for the liberty and dignity of the human soul, imposed that vow. "Consent," said one of our old and illustrious jurisconsults, "is the seal, the source, and the soul of the vow. Wretched hypocrisy," says again the eloquent Antoine Le Maistre, "which you shield under the shadow of a profession so holy in itself, and so sweet to those on whom God has bestowed the choice, spirit, and love of it, but which reprobates the inhuman hardships suffered by poor children to whom no such impulse has been given, who have been forced to enter there by the violence of their parents, who are bound to it by chains of fear and terror, and who are

retained there by the same force, by the same terror, which prisons and tortures would hold over them."[1]

This criminal abuse was incessantly counterbalanced by a multitude of freely conceived vocations, nobly persevered in, and accomplished, despite the resistance of their families, by scions of the highest aristocracy. Bossuet, in his sermons for the profession of Mademoiselle de Bouillon and other daughters of great houses, has cast his eagle glance upon these astonishing contradictions. "What has not covetousness spoiled?" he says elsewhere; "it has vitiated even paternal love. Parents throw their children into the cloister without vocation, and prevent their entering when they have one."[2]

Of these two evils, the last is still often seen among ourselves. The first had gradually diminished before the great catastrophe which destroyed, at once, all the abuses and all the rights of cloistral life. It yielded to the irresistible empire of manners and public opinion. If moral constraint was still sometimes employed in Italy and elsewhere to introduce daughters of the nobility and middle classes[3] into chapter-houses and female convents, we can affirm that in the French monasteries, in the last period of their existence, there was scarcely to be found a single individual who had not entered by her own choice. The startling contradiction which the declamations of Diderot, La Harpe, and many others, upon *cloistered victims*, received in 1791, proved this abundantly. In a single day all the cloisters were destroyed and the monastic vow declared null. How many monks, how many nuns, married? Certainly

[1] See the fine pleading of Antoine Le Maistre, quoted by OSCAR DE VALLÉE, *Judiciary Eloquence in the Seventeenth Century*, 1856, pp. 105, 116.

[2] *Pensées Chrétiennes et Morales*, No. 42.—It is well known that in his time the word *religion* meant a religious order, and that they still call becoming a *religieux*, *entrer en religion*.

[3] Thence this proverb, so universally quoted in Italy in the eighteenth century, and with too much justice: "*Le badie sono la preda degl' uomini e la tomba della donne.*"

not one in a thousand. Most part of the women, in particular, voluntarily re-entered the cloister as soon as they had the power.

Instead of obliging any man to become a monk, or using restraint to keep him so, there seems to have been a greater inclination to make the abandonment and transformation of that state more practicable. Individual requests for permission to leave the cloister and live in complete independence, such as that which several Benedictines of St. Maur addressed in 1770 to the Parliament of Paris, were repulsed. But when entire communities demanded to be secularised, their prayer was granted: three of the most ancient abbeys of the diocese of Lyons solicited and obtained that melancholy favour, in the second half of the eighteenth century.[1]

Under the influence of all these united causes, the monastic institution hastened more and more to complete decay. It would be unjust to make this condemnation too general, and above all to forget the generous attempts which, from time to time, lifted up their protest against the invasion of evil and interrupted its march. Many luminous points shone still in Belgium and in Germany, as well as in Italy, Spain, and France. The reform of the order of Citeaux, undertaken in the sixteenth century by the Abbot of Feuillans,[2] was the worthy prelude of that which, a hundred years later, renewed the marvels of the Thebaid, in immortalising the name of La Trappe. In the seventeenth century, more than one worthy scion of the Benedictine stem, such as Sfondrate[3] and D'Aguirre,[4] showed themselves

[1] Those of the Isle Barbe, Ainay, and Savigny.—A. BERNARD, *Cartulaire de Savigny*, p. 114.

[2] Jean de la Barrière.—See a striking description of his person and appearance before Henry III., in August 1583, in the *Registre Journal* of PIERRE DE L'ESTOILE.

[3] Grand-nephew of Gregory XIV., Monk and Abbot of St. Gall, before being made Cardinal by Innocent XII.

[4] Born in 1630, died in 1699, General of the Congregation of St. Benedict in Spain, made Cardinal by Innocent XI., after his *Defensio Cathedræ*

worthy emulators of Bellarmine and Baronius, by their zeal for sacred science and the defence of the liberties of the Church; whilst the immortal pleiad which is grouped in history around Mabillon and Montfaucon, crown the name of St. Maur with a glory which remains unrivalled. Mabillon, above all, the most illustrious of modern monks, merits a place by the side of the greatest and most holy, not only for his colossal erudition and inappreciable labours, but especially for the purity of his life, the nobleness, uprightness, and ardent integrity of his character.

But these glorious individuals, and their partial, local, and temporary reforms, were not sufficient to redeem the increasing miseries and infirmities of the general mass of an institution, which would have required the employment of all the strength and solicitude of the Church to save and regenerate it. In France especially—that is to say, in the country of all Christendom which, whether for good or evil, exerts the strongest influence upon the rest of the world—the great majority of the monasteries escaped every regenerating influence, remained a prey to the *commende*, and sank deeper and deeper into disorder and discredit. It was thus during all the eighteenth century, and towards its end, a learned Benedictine of St. Germain-des-Prés could thus write to one of his brethren of the congregation of St. Vanne: "Of all the monks of your congregation who come here to lodge, I have scarcely seen one who has edified us. You, no doubt, would say as much of our brethren who go to you."[1]

S. Petri against the Declaration of 1682. Bossuet, even in contending against him, calls him *the light of the Church, model of manners, example of piety*. When a cardinal, he kept always near him two or three monks, with whom he followed the practices of monastic life: before dying, he ordered his heart to be borne to Monte Cassino, "quod S. Patris Benedicti ab adolescentiæ vestigiis adhæserat." He composed beforehand his epitaph, thus:—

"Vita Peccator, appellatione Monachus,
S. Benedicti studio Theologus."

[1] Letter of Dom Clement, about 1780, quoted by M. DANTIER, *Rapport sur la Correspondance Inédite des Bénédictins*, p. 19.

A sentiment of contempt, exaggerated but universal, had everywhere replaced the profound veneration with which the great monastic orders had so long inspired the Catholic world.[1] However large a part impiety, and the hatred of the wicked for the Christian name, had in this general sentiment, it is impossible to deny that the religious orders, taken altogether, had undergone the most melancholy change. The tables were turned. From the time of the peace of the Church, and throughout the whole middle ages, the contrast between the two bodies of the clergy, regular and secular, had been startling, and entirely to the advantage of the former. The regular clergy had not only eclipsed, but in some measure swallowed up, the secular clergy. Strictness, fervour, self-devotion, all the priestly virtues, had their home almost exclusively in the cloister. In more recent ages it was precisely the reverse; and when the Revolution came to separate the good wheat from the tares, and to bring out the Gallican Church triumphantly from the most glorious trial to which any Church has ever submitted, the bishops and parish priests almost always showed themselves superior to the monks.

Is it needful to ascertain further the depth of their fall, or to explain the true cause of their ruin? When a religious order becomes inferior in virtue or in faith to the remainder of the clergy, it loses the motive of its existence,

[1] They had arrived at such a point that one of the most pious, illustrious, and victorious princes of the seventeenth century, Duke Charles V. of Lorraine, competitor of Sobieski, conqueror of Hungary, brother-in-law of the Emperor Leopold I., and ancestor of the present reigning house in Austria, wrote in his *Testament Politique*, intended for the instruction of the princes of the imperial family, these cruel words: "It is not proper to introduce monkhood into councils: they are a kind of men who have never done well to monarchs, and who are destined only to do them harm. . . . The less there are of priests and monks in a family, the more the idea of religion will be preserved there; peace more assured, and secrets more impenetrable."—*Testament Politique de Charles V.*, quoted by the COUNT D'HAUSSONVILLE, *Histoire de la Réunion de la Lorraine*, t. iii. p. 380.

and signs beforehand its own death-warrant. It is no longer anything, to use the words of Bossuet, but a "spiritual corpse," and its own "living tomb."

Those who may accuse me of an excess of severity, I shall refer to the imposing and incontestable authority of two great lights of the Gallican Church, at a period when monastic corruption was still far from being complete. It is true that their eloquent lamentations were addressed to nuns; but it is unquestionable that abuses and scandals, too frequent in female communities, were still more so in the monasteries of men, of which the *commende* had become the general law, while it was only to be met with in exceptional cases in abbeys of women. Let us listen, then, to the significant words of Fénélon, preaching, before he was a bishop, the panegyric of St. Bernard before the Bernardine nuns—"Oh reform! reform! which has cost Bernard so many vigils, fasts, tears, sweats, and ardent prayers, can we believe that thou shalt perish? No, no: never let that thought enter my heart. Perish rather the unhappy day which should light such a fall! What! shall Bernard himself see from the sanctuary where he is crowned, his house ravaged, his work disfigured, and his children a prey to the desires of the age? Rather let my eyes change into fountains of tears: rather let the whole Church wail night and day lest that which was her glory be turned into her shame! . . . Oh daughters of Bernard! let me see your father living in you. He reanimated monastic discipline, which was almost extinguished in his time: will you permit it to perish in yours?"

Similar expressions, not less pointed, are to be found in that famous discourse upon the advantages and duties of the religious life, which is sometimes attributed to Fénélon, and sometimes to Bossuet, and is worthy of either:—"This house is not yours: it is not for you that it was built and founded; it is for the education of young girls. . . . If then it should ever happen (suffer it not, oh God! rather

overthrow these walls!)—if it should ever happen that you neglect your essential function; if, forgetting that you are, in Jesus Christ, the servants of this youth, you think only of enjoying in peace the consecrated possessions here; if in this humble school of Jesus Christ we find only vain and gorgeous women, forgetful of their birth, and habituated to a disdainful haughtiness which quenches the Spirit of God and effaces the gospel from the depths of the heart,—alas, what a scandal! the pure gold should be changed into lead, the spouse of Jesus Christ, without wrinkles and without blemish, should be blacker than coal, and He should know her no more!"

In the same discourse we find other sad disclosures of the internal condition of the great communities in the seventeenth century. "Poverty is not only unpractised, but unknown. They do not know what it is to be poor, by coarse food, by the necessity of labour, by a simple and narrow lodging, by all the details of life. . . . It is, however, by these means that communities can be liberal, generous, and disinterested. In other days, the hermits of Egypt and the East not only lived by the labour of their hands, but dispensed much alms; ships might be seen on the sea charged with their charities. Now it requires prodigious revenues to support a community. Families accustomed to poverty spare everything—they subsist on little; but the communities are not satisfied with abundance. How many hundreds of families could subsist honestly on a sum which scarcely suffices for the expenditure of one of these communities which profess to renounce the possessions of the families of the age, in order to embrace poverty! What a satire! what a contrast! If you have business with poor people charged with great families, you often find them upright, moderate, capable of yielding for the sake of peace, and of an easy disposition. If you have business with a community, it makes a point of conscience to treat you rigorously. I am ashamed to say it—I speak it only

groaning and in secret—I only whisper it in the ear to instruct the spouses of Jesus Christ; but I am obliged to say it, for unhappily it is true: There are none more easily offended, more difficult, more tenacious, more ardent in law-suits, than those who ought not even to have any business affairs. Mean and contracted hearts! can it be in the school of Christianity that you have been formed?"[1]

In sight of these revelations, and of so many other incontestable proofs of an inveterate evil, we are unavoidably led to put to ourselves a melancholy question: How did the Church allow herself to be consumed by that lamentable decay? Why did she not intervene with her divine authority to save this precious portion of her inheritance? This is, I will venture to say, the darkest and most unaccountable page of her history—that fatal indulgence can never be sufficiently regretted. The most energetic remedies, the most inexorable severities, would scarcely have sufficed to arrest that cancer. What, then, could come of contrivances and inaction? It was necessary to meet this plague with fire and sword. No means should have been neglected of

[1] Strict justice requires that we oppose to this sad picture one which Fénélon himself has drawn of the fervour and regularity which reigned among the Carmelites: "Behold the daughters of Theresa; they lament for all sinners who do not lament for themselves, and arrest the vengeance which is ready to fall. They have no longer eyes for the world, nor the world for them. Their mouths only open for sacred songs, and, except in the hour of praise, all flesh is here silent before the Lord. Tender and delicate frames bear even in extreme old age, with the penitential sackcloth, the burden of labour. Here my faith is consoled; here is seen a noble simplicity, a liberal poverty, a cheerful penitence, sweetened by the anointing of the love of God. Lord, who hast assembled Thy brides upon the mountain to pour forth in the midst of them a river of peace, keep them there gathered under the shadow of Thy wings; show to the vanquished world those whom they have trampled under foot. Alas! smite not the earth, whilst Thou still findest there this precious remnant of Thine election."—*Sermon pour la Fête de Sainte Thérèse*, Œuvres, t. xvii. p. 264, ed. LEBEL. He says elsewhere—"The imperfections of the cloister which meet with such contempt, are more innocent before God than the most shining virtues to which the world does honour."—*Sermon pour la Profession d'une Religieuse.*

preventing by radical and inexorable reforms that disgraceful and universal fall which was to inflict an irreparable injury upon the Christian republic; and nothing was seriously attempted! Let no one tell me of the immense obstacles which the Church would have encountered in the interested opposition of temporal power, in the cupidity of the aristocracy, in the laxness of the clergy, and their too frequent and close complicity with the evil. Since her existence began she has always encountered such obstacles; and when she willed, and willed strongly, has always braved and surmounted them. All the reforms—even the most laborious, such as those of St. Theresa and of Rancé—ended in success, they all won the approval even of worldly opinion. They only required to be perpetuated, propagated, and imposed, by supreme authority. The popes, it is true, no longer exercised throughout Europe the ascendancy which they had in the middle ages. However, it is difficult to believe that in the sixteenth century, or even in the seventeenth, a vigorous and prolonged effort of the Holy Chair, supported by the episcopacy, would not have succeeded, if not in extirpating all the roots of the evil, at least in arresting its growth, repressing its excesses, and, above all, in exciting the zeal of the good monks and the sympathy of the faithful people and orthodox princes. Louis XIV. himself, who showed so much sympathy for the individual and partial enterprise of Rancé, would not have refused his support to a more extensive reform, originating in a higher quarter. Perhaps even in the eighteenth century the attempt would have succeeded. In any case it was well worth undertaking.

I know and admire the generous but partial endeavours of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Francis of Sales, of the first Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld. I am not the less compelled to say, that we seek in vain in the annals of the Church, since the Council of Trent, for a great and energetic effort against the evil, or even for a generous and resonant appeal, destined to awaken all hearts, to show the danger, to point

out the abyss, and to excite to resistance. That the bishops, and even the greatest among them, should have ended by remaining passive witnesses of so many scandals, may be, if not justified, at least explained, by the abuse of exemptions, which had disarmed and set them aside from all intervention in the life of the communities. But how shall we explain, that, among so many good popes, not one was found to refuse the bulls which delivered the honour and possessions of the most celebrated monasteries to persons notoriously unworthy, such as Bussy d'Amboise, and the Abbé Dubois? How shall we explain that all of them have left that purulent plague to eat deeper and deeper, until the day of irremediable ruin?

To this formidable question there is, however, one answer. The reform of the religious orders is scarcely more in the power of the Church than their foundation. The Church has never directly founded one religious order. The fact is incontestable. To found a religious order, there are required men specially raised and destined by God to that work, a Benedict, a Francis, a Dominic, an Ignatius. The Church approves and encourages such men, but does not create them by an authoritative act. And could it be otherwise with reform, which is, perhaps, still more difficult than foundation?

Men were then required, and none were to be found. God had not given them, and the Church could not create them. Some appeared from time to time, but not enough for a grand, general, and definitive reform. Such was the reason why the religious orders were not reformed.

There remained, it is true, a remedy—the suppression of the greater part of these establishments. But the Church recoils before so extreme a cure. It suits her spirit to build; but to destroy is always infinitely repugnant to her. Is she wrong? She is always patient—some may, perhaps, think that she is too much so.

However that may be, the evil continued and increased,

till at last it exhausted the patience of God Himself. "Divine justice," says Bossuet, "avenges excesses by other excesses."[1] That which the Church left undone, was done by the crime of the world.

But we must never consent to absolve any crime, under pretext that its victims merited their fate.

"God's justice is often served by man's injustice,"[2] but it remains no less injustice.

"The universe," says M. de Maistre, and he has said nothing more true, "is full of penalties most justly inflicted on guilty men by executioners who are guiltier still."[3]

We will not deny that the monks—not all indeed, but too generally—were unfaithful to their duties, to their mission, and to their oaths; but did it belong to secular power, or, above all, to triumphant revolutions, to punish them? Were the disorders, abuses, and scandals of which they are accused, and which are too often proved against them, a crime against social order, that they gave that right of repression, and even of suppression, which has been arrogated? No; the Church alone had the right of exercising against them her sovereign and infallible justice, and Christians only are entitled to mourn or complain that she did not exercise it in time. They know that God will demand a severe account of those who had betrayed that imprescriptible duty. But they know also that He will judge and chastise more severely still those who have completed that great immolation, not certainly with the view of regenerating these holy institutions, or of appeasing divine justice, but solely to gratify the most ignoble instincts of human passion.

Yes, reforms were necessary; and the absence or inefficacy of these reforms rendered the catastrophe possible and natural. But it does not follow that the wicked effort which cut the thread of monastic existence can ever be justified or

[1] *Histoire des Variations*, liv. vii. p. 469.
[2] Madame Swetchine.
[3] Letter of 29th May 1819.

excused. For never crime was more wicked or more insane. Montesquieu has justly stigmatised despotism, by comparing it to certain savages in America, who cut down their trees to gather the fruit. But what can we think of these modern savages, who, under pretext of pruning it and cleansing it, have laid low and uprooted that venerable tree which had sheltered for so many centuries, labour, knowledge, happiness, and prayer?

God preserve us, then, from becoming, in any degree whatever, the accomplices of those who have led on, prepared, or justified that catastrophe by their invectives or calumnies! To preserve us for ever from such a danger, it is only necessary to remind ourselves what has been the impure source of these attacks, and the character of the accusers. Let us judge of the equity of the tribunals which have condemned the monks in the past by that of the processes entered against them in our own days, in Switzerland, in Spain, and in Piedmont, in the countries where they have survived the terrible trial of the French invasion, and profited by the Revolution. Let us weigh the contradictory reproaches which overwhelm them. If they are strict in observing their rule, it is said that they are behind their age; if they do not observe it, the same voices which insulted them as fanatics, exclaim against their laxness. If they manage their domains badly, these are taken away, under pretence that nothing is made of them; and if they manage them well, they are still taken away, for fear they should become too rich.[1] If they are numerous, they are forbidden to receive novices; and when that state of things has reduced them to a handful of old men, having no successors, their patrimony is confiscated. It has always been thus, from Henry VIII. and Gustavus Vasa, down to our contemporary sophists of Turin and Berne. The religious orders have been specially reproached with corruption and

[1] We only repeat the line of argument and conduct employed against the convents of Aargau from 1835 to 1845.

uselessness only by those powers which would inherit their wealth, and who begin by condemning them to barrenness. Nothing was left for them to do, and then it is said that they did nothing.[1]

And more: almost all the vices which have first enfeebled and then dishonoured monastic life have resulted from the invasions of the lay spirit and temporal power in the government of monastic things. If discipline and austerity had perished, without hope of return, from many of the cloisters, was not that caused, as we have seen, by the introduction of the *commende?* and was not this odious and flagrant violation of the formal will of the founders, always solicited or imposed by princes? It is consequently as much by the covetousness and bad faith of lay power, as by the culpable weakness of pastors too docile to that power, that the work of charity became thus the prey of egotism and sensuality.

We shall see hereafter by what a series of encroachments, hindrances, and deceptions, many Catholic princes, aided by their law officers, attempted to wear out and weaken the religious spirit—the spirit of penitence and austerity, which is always a spirit of strength and liberty—in those cloisters, which at last seemed to breathe no other spirit than that of the world and of profane life.

But even now we have a right to say to the habitual detractors of the monks, who are at the same time the apologists of their proscription, Do you know what is the only reproach which you can justly address to them? It is that of resembling yourselves. What is this degradation, this sensuality, this *relâchement*, of which you accuse them as a crime, if not too exact a conformity to your own manner of life?

[1] LORAIN, *Histoire de Cluny*, p. 14. The Abbey of Muri had offered, in 1837, to the canton of Aargau, to maintain a great school for classical and professional education; the cantonal government answered by a law, which interdicted all monks from teaching: after which it abolished the monastic community as useless to the state.

And from whence do these strange censors come? What! is it amidst the joys and freedom of secular life, its wealth and its leisure, that you have learned to judge so strictly the different degrees of mortification and austerity, of fasts and vigils? Is there not enough in history of one Henry VIII., a king himself so temperate, so just, and so chaste, that he might well despoil and ruin monasteries, under pretext of punishing their incontinence and irregularity? Is it you, who perhaps have never been seen to bend the knee in a Christian temple since your childhood, who thus sit in judgment on the regularity of prayers and of the canonical office? Have you so scrupulously repressed in yourselves all the desires and weaknesses of the flesh, that you are entitled to weigh in the balance of the sanctuary the irregularities, more or less established, of certain monks? "Tell us your own efforts," said Bossuet to some rigorists of his time. Ah! if you would begin by trying the most relaxed rule, by constraining yourselves to follow the observance of the most degenerate order, you might ascend with some authority the tribunal of history, and your bitter censure would inspire some confidence. What! the Benedictines eat meat! the barefooted Carmelites wear shoes! the Cordeliers do not encircle their loins with a cord! Indeed! and you who accuse them, what have you done of all that? They do not practise discipline upon themselves so often as formerly. But how many times a week do you practise it? They do not devote so many hours to prayer and labour as they ought. But where are the fields which you have fertilised by your sweat, or the souls which you have saved by your supplications? After all, the most criminal, the most depraved, live only as you live: this is their crime. If it is one, it is not your part to chastise it. What! you taint the Church with your vices, and then you reproach her with being tainted and stained! You administer poison to your victim, and impute it to him as a crime when he succumbs to it! Ah! let the faithful, the zealous, and the pure in-

dignantly mourn the monastic downfall; let a Bernard, a Pierre Damien, a Charles Borromeo, a Francis de Sales, a Catherine of Sienna, a Theresa, denounce them to God and to posterity. That we can conceive. We could not, indeed, imagine them to be silent. But you, the heirs or panegyrists of the authors of that evil which has corrupted the monks, as well as of the spoliation which they have sustained,—you ought to be the last to express astonishment or regret; for in so doing you pronounce judgment against your fathers, or against your own selves.

It is surely time to close the domain of history to these false philosophers, to this mean literature, to these base sycophants of oppression, who, bent on following in the train of the Vandals, endeavour still to tarnish the memory of those whom their predecessors have scarcely yet delivered from the axe of the headsman and the hammer of the destroyer.

Modern society, which has fattened on the spoils of the monastic orders, might content itself with that; their remains should not be insulted. Let it leave to Christians, to the apologists of the Religious life, to those who endeavour to re-establish it by purifying it from all recent dross, the task of denouncing in the past, in order to prevent the possibility of their return, those disorders which have degraded it. In the midst even of their degeneration, the most lawless monks have been guilty only in the eyes of God and the Church. Whatever may have been their sins against their own rule, against their condition, against their conscience, they have committed none against their fellow-creatures or against society.

Vain will be any endeavour to alter the distinctive character of their social historical part, which is that of having lived to do good. Humanly speaking, they have done nothing else: all their career is occupied with peopling deserts, protecting the poor, and enriching the world. Sadly degenerated towards their decline, much less active and less industrious than in their origin, they were never

less charitable. Where is the country, where is the man, whom they have injured? Where are the monuments of their oppression? the memorials of their rapacity? If we follow the furrow which they have dug through history, we shall find everywhere only the traces of their beneficence.

And even if it had been otherwise in the time of their decay, might not we find in their glorious past overpowering claims upon the respect and consideration of posterity? Can we forget the shelter which was open during so many centuries to the new-born forces of Christendom? Shall that Christendom, matured and emancipated, use her vigour and liberty to dishonour the sacred cradles of her infancy? Ought not that long succession of acts of charity, courage, patience, magnanimous and persevering efforts against rebellious nature and human weakness, of which the history of the first times of all the religious orders is composed, disarm injustice and ingratitude for ever? Ought not all these accumulated labours, all these services rendered, all these benefits lavished on so many generations by the spiritual ancestors of the most obscure monasteries, have sufficed to assure to their successors the right common to all men, of peace, freedom, and life?

CHAPTER VIII

RUIN

They saw the sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned, and the gates burnt up, and shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest or in one of the mountains.—1 MACCAB. iv. 38.

BUT no! neither justice nor pity; neither recollection nor gratitude; neither respect for the past nor care for the future: such has been the law of modern progress when it has encountered these old and venerable remains upon its road. Hate and cupidity have spared nothing.

Of all the human institutions which have been assailed or overthrown by revolution, something has always endured. Monarchy, although weakened and shaken, has proved that it can reassume its ascendancy. Nobility, although everywhere, except in England, annulled and degraded, still exists among us. Industrial and mercantile wealth has never been more powerful. The ancient monastic orders alone have been condemned to perish without return. The only one of all the institutions of the past which has been totally spoiled and annihilated is the most useful and the most legitimate of all—the only one which never had an abuse of strength or conquest of violence to reproach itself with, but which all the violences and tyrannies have joined hands to annihilate by the vilest of aggressions, that which kills in order to rob.

The torrents of lava vomited forth by Vesuvius and Etna have till now stopped and turned aside from the dwellings which the Camaldules and Benedictines have chosen for themselves upon the sides of these terrible craters. The

moral volcano which has ravaged the Christian world with its eruptions has had less discernment; it has carried away the whole. All has been swallowed up in the same ruin. It is not only in the towns, in the great centres of population, in contact with the strong currents of modern life, that this destruction has had its full course: it has marched through deserts and forests to seek its victims. There has been no solitude so profound, no mountain so precipitous, no valley so sequestered, as to balk it of its prey. It has regarded neither sex nor age. It has laid its hands upon the defenceless old age of the monk as well as upon the innocent and touching weakness of the nun; it has seized them both in their cells, expelled them from their lawful dwelling-place, robbed them of their patrimony, and cast them out as vagabonds and outlaws, without asylum and without resource, upon the world. Disciples of Christ, too often imperfect, but re-established and consecrated by an odious persecution, they have henceforth been able to say, with their Divine Master: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."[1]

To be thus put out of law, and under the ban of humanity, it is necessary that you should be the most ancient and constant benefactors of Christian society! And by what hands is this done? By the miserable power of a crew of sophists and calumniators, who in reality have done nothing for humanity—who have bestowed upon it, under the guise of a benefit, only an increase of pride, jealousy, and discord—who have built nothing, preserved nothing; but who have begun to write their discourses with the venom of falsehood, who have signed their conclusions with blood, and whose theories all end in the strokes of the axe. Divine justice, for the most part, has already seized them. Some have learned to know, even in this world, that the wealth wrested from others is neither profitable nor satisfactory. More

[1] Matt. viii. 20.

than one, before the end of his career, has had reason to envy the repose of those whose patrimony he had cruelly spoiled, and whose peace he had troubled.

And as if such wickedness by itself was not enough to bring down the vengeance of God, the forfeit was aggravated by all the details and all the circumstances of its execution. We find nowhere in history the record of a devastation more blind and brutal. What good man has not shuddered at the sight, or even at the thought, of a ruin so vast and pitiless, of desolation so universal, of these remains which still lie around us, melancholy, polluted, and shapeless? What invasion of barbarians has ever annihilated and devoured at once so many admirable monuments, so many popular recollections, so many treasures of art and poetry, so many resources for public charity and the pressing necessities of the people? What an ignominious contrast between those ancient races, which thought only of building, enriching, and preserving, and the recent generations, which know only how to overthrow, to destroy, and to confiscate—between the fathers, who were always giving away, and the sons, who are always stealing the alms of their fathers!

However, throughout Europe, already so much dishonoured by the ravages of the Reformation and the French Revolution, that ignoble impulse has still been prevalent since the commencement of our century. The licensed robbers of revolutionary spoliation, and those tame Vandals who did not even redeem their barbarous sacrilege by the savage energy of the French republicans, have continued, in Russia, in Spain, in Switzerland, and in Piedmont, the murderous work of Joseph II. and of the Constituent Assembly.

Not only amid the storms of a triumphant or struggling revolution, when the people in their delirium seem scarcely to be conscious of their crimes, have these acts been committed. No; it is in times of peace, and in direct contradiction to the wish of the population, that a sapient bureaucracy, eager to detect and chastise as a crime the

least error in accounts, has been seen proceeding with methodical gravity to the work of spoliation, to a palpable and permanent violation of the rights of property. It is not the work of foreign conquerors, nor even revolutionary hordes; it is too often the crowned descendants, the old founders and benefactors, the governments, regular, pacific, and recognised by all, who have raised destruction into a system, and prefaced it by confiscation.

The son of Maria Theresa suppressed in his states a hundred and twenty-four monasteries, and confiscated their goods, valued at more than two hundred millions of florins; which has not prevented his empire from being three times bankrupt since then. But even during our own lifetime it has been calculated that in five years, between 1830 and 1835, three thousand monasteries have disappeared from the soil of Europe. In the kingdom of Portugal alone, three hundred were destroyed under the regency of Don Pedro. I am not aware that the number of those which Queen Christina annihilated in Spain by a single dash of her pen has yet been estimated.[1] Two hundred others were drowned in the blood of Poland[2] by that Muscovite autocracy which always maintains so perfect an understanding with the democrats of the rest of Europe, to enchain and despoil the Church.

To annihilate thus *en masse* these venerable retreats, which for so many centuries have furnished a shelter to the most precious monuments, and a sanctuary to the dearest recollections, of all the nations of Christendom, implies an avowed and practical contempt for all that men have hitherto respected and loved. This has not been wanting. The desecrators of monasteries have not hesitated to outrage the glory, heroism, and holy traditions which are essential to

[1] In 1835, after the *enlightened* people of Madrid had burned alive some Jesuits in their convent.

[2] The Emperor Nicholas I. destroyed 187 by his ukase of the 31st July 1841.

national life and independence, in order to reach more effectually the men and things of God. What the atheistical Republic dared to do in France under the Terror, the Protestant monarchy had already done in England. Henry IV. and Louis XIV. were not the first kings whose remains had been profaned and scattered by the destruction of cloisters. The body of King James IV. of Scotland, killed in defence of his country,[1] was disinterred and decapitated by workmen, after the confiscation by Henry VIII. of the abbey whither his noble remains had been carried.[2] The bones of Alfred the Great met with no more respect when the last remnants of the monastery which he had founded for his own sepulchre[3] were removed to give place to a prison. The most popular memories have found no more grace than the most obscure cenobites. Neither Richard Cœur de Lion nor Blanche of Castile have been able to protect Fontevrault or Maubuisson from the common fate.

The heroes who slept under the guard of the monks have had the same fate as the kings. The ashes of the Cid have been carried away from the confiscated monastery of St. Pierre de Cardenas, which he had chosen for his tomb, and where he left his Ximena when he went into exile, tearing himself from her "as the nail is torn from the finger."[4] The magnificent convent which Gonsalvo de Cordova founded in Grenada for the Jeronymites has been changed into barracks, the church into a magazine, and the sword of that great captain, till then suspended before the high altar, taken down and sold by auction![5]

[1] At the battle of Flodden, in 1513.

[2] At Sheen, near Windsor. [3] At Winchester.

[4] *Poema del Cid.*—See the delightful masterpiece of OZANAM, entitled *Un Pélerinage au Pays du Cid.*

[5] In 1835, and for the sum of *three francs*, according to the Spanish journal *Heraldo*, of January 1844. This monastery, one of the most magnificent edifices of Grenada, had at first been constructed by Gonsalvo for a palace. King Ferdinand the Catholic, having gone to visit him there, said to him, sharply, "This palace is more splendid than mine." "True, Sire," responded Gonsalvo, "and it is destined for a greater lord than you, for I give it to

These wretched devastators have not even spared the memorials of human love, purified by the peace of the cloister and the prayers of the monks, but which the barbarous enlightenment of our days has confounded, in brutal blindness, with the relics of faith and penitence. The tomb of Heloise has been destroyed at Paraclet, as well as that of Laura among the Cordeliers of Avignon; and the body of Inez de Castro, confided by the unpitying grief of Pedro of Aragon to the sons of St. Bernard,[1] has been snatched from its royal mausoleum to be profaned by the soldiers.[2]

But even in confiscating the secular abbeys, and condemning their peaceful inhabitants to exile or death, the ruins at least might have been preserved; still, as in England and Germany, we might have been permitted to behold in their funereal beauty some remains of those monuments of inimitable art and sublime architecture. But the modern Vandals have improved upon the example given them by the pretended reformers of three centuries ago. In Spain, in Portugal, and, above all, in France, the art of destruction has reached a perfection unknown to the most barbarous of our ancestors.

Among us it has not been enough to pillage, to profane, and to confiscate; it has been necessary to overthrow, to raze, not to leave one stone upon another. What do I say? to ransack the bowels of the earth that the last of these consecrated stones might be rooted out! It has been said, with too much truth,[3] that no nation has ever suffered herself to be thus despoiled by her own citizens of those

God." I quote the tradition as it was related to me at Grenada in 1843, by a colonel of cavalry who superintended the grooming of the horses of his regiment under the admirable cloisters due to the generosity of the great captain.

[1] At Alcobaça.

[2] Let us add, for our greater shame, that these soldiers were Frenchmen hired by Don Pedro. The hair of Inez of Castro, stolen from her violated tomb, is in the house of an amateur of Paris. In another house are shown the bones of Ximena!

[3] De Guilhermy, *Annal. Archéol.*, i. 101.

monuments which best attested, in her own bosom, not only the culture of the arts and sciences, but the noblest efforts of thought and the most generous devotedness of virtue. The empire of the East has not been ravaged by the Turks as France has been, and still is, by that band of insatiable destroyers, who, after having purchased these vast constructions and immense domains at the lowest rate, work them like quarries for sacrilegious profit. I have seen with my own eyes the capitals and columns of an abbey church which I could name, employed as so much metal for the neighbouring road. Colour-sellers who should remove with a palette-knife the carmine or ultramarine from the pictures of Van Eyck or Perugino to increase the stores in their shops, could do no more.

In Asia Minor, in Egypt, and in Greece there still remain, here and there, some fragments which the rage of the unbelievers has spared, some celebrated places where the pious ardour of the pilgrim and the curiosity of the erudite can still satisfy themselves. But in France and in the countries which imitate her,

"Tota teguntur
Pergama dumetis: etiam periere ruinæ."

Vandalism has only paused when there was nothing more to crumble down. Sometimes the very name and local recollection of monasteries which have peopled and put into cultivation the entire surrounding country are thus obliterated. Whilst a recondite erudition exerts itself to analyse the Etruscan or Pelasgic ruins, and falls into ecstasy before the least fragment of a Roman road, we have ignored for years the very site and new destination of such illustrious centres of virtue and Christian knowledge as Cluny, Citeaux, Fleury, and Marmoutier, and, still more so, of many other abbeys less celebrated, each of which, however, had its history, full of merits and services worthy of everlasting recollection.

"Vix reliquias, vix nomina servans
Obruitur, propriis non agnoscenda ruinis."

It is in maps and books of ancient geography that the sites of these admirable creations of faith and charity must be sought; too often it is vain to question the failing memory of the neighbouring inhabitants, a race stupefied by incredulity and a frightful materialism. They reply to you as the Bedouins of the desert reply to the traveller who questions them of the genealogy of the Pharaohs or the annals of the Thebaid.

Elsewhere, it is true, these august sanctuaries remain standing, but only to be mutilated and metamorphosed, to be devoted by the hand of the spoiler to such a destination as shall inflict upon them an ineffaceable stain. Here it is a stable, there a theatre, in another case a barrack or a jail, which we find installed in all that remains of the most renowned abbeys. St. Bernard and his five hundred monks have been replaced at Clairvaux by five hundred convicts. St. Benedict of Aniane, the great monastic reformer of the time of Charlemagne, has not been more successful in turning away this outrage from the house of which, even in heaven, he bears the name. Fontevrault and Mont St. Michel have submitted to the same fate. These houses of prayer and peace have become what is called in our days *central houses of detention*, in order, no doubt, that they might not contradict M. de Maistre, who had said, "You will have to build prisons with the ruins of the convents which you have destroyed."[1]

Profanations still more revolting have been seen among us. At Cluny, the most illustrious monastery of Christen-

[1] Eysse, Beaulieu, Cadillac Loos, and other central prisons are also ancient abbeys. The town of Limoges appears specially favoured under this civilising point of view: its central prison has been built on the site of the Abbey of St. Augustin-lez-Limoges, but with materials procured from the ruins of the chief abbey of the order of Grandmont, and its theatre is raised upon the site of the church of the monastery of St. Martial, the most ancient of Limousin. At Paris we see, in our own day, the theatre of the Pantheon installed in the recently destroyed church of St. Benedict, and a coffee-house in the choir of Prémontrés.

dom, the church, which was the largest in France and in Europe, yielding in dimensions only to St. Peter's in Rome, after having been sacked and demolished, stone by stone, for twenty years, has been transformed into stud-stables,[1] and the starting-post of the stallions occupied still, in 1844, the place of the high altar.

Le Bec, the Christian academy immortalised by Lanfranc and St. Anselm, the cradle of Catholic philosophy, has been made useful in the same fashion. Why, indeed, should St. Anselm have found mercy for his abbey any more than Pierre le Venerable? Is it not thus that the sons of strength and fortune are accustomed to honour the great men of the past? Have not the Turks done the same with the places where Aristotle and Plato taught, and where Demosthenes spoke?

If a certain indignation mixes itself with the bitterness of these regrets, it may be pardoned to a man who has given up much of his time to seek, in almost all the countries of Europe, the vestiges of monastic grandeur and benevolence, and who, in his laborious course, has stumbled everywhere over the ruins accumulated by modern barbarism. He has studied with scrupulous attention the means employed to put the hoarded treasures of charity once more, as it is said, in circulation, and to restore the wealth of *Mort-main* to what is now regarded as life. He has collected the last recollections of old men, often octogenarians, who had seen the monks in their splendour and their freedom. He has

[1] Let us add, that Cambrom, one of the most celebrated foundations of St. Bernard in Belgium, has also served a long time as stud-stables to the Count Duval of Beaulieu, and that in 1845 the Abbey of St. Croix, at St. Lô, has been demolished, to make room for a depôt of stallions.—*Bulletin Monumental*, t. xii. p. 295. Here are a list of other monasteries, serving now as stud-stables since the budget of 1851: Braisne, Langonnet, Moutier-en-Der, Rosières, St. Maxient, St. Menehould, St. Pierre-sur-Dive, St. Nicolas de Caen. With regard to abbeys which, like Nôtre Dame of Saintes, or St. Germain of Compiègne, are now used as stables, they are innumerable.

sometimes reached the site of these sanctuaries just at the moment when the pick-axe of the destroyer was raised to break down the last arch of their churches. He has been denied admittance at the gate of the Chartreuse of Seville by a Belgian Vandal, who had built up therein a china manufactory. He has found swine installed by German Lutherans in the cells of *Nothgottes*,[1] and by French Catholics under the admirable sculptures of the cloister of Cadouin.[2] Thus he has learned that it is possible to meet with men whose voracious cupidity and impious grossness degrade them beneath the brute.

It is not so everywhere, I know. In many quarters industry has shielded these spoils from the destroying hammer for a time, that she might enthrone her speculations and manufactures there. In such a transformation nothing would seem more natural than to profit by the example and tradition recalled by these sacred places. A new and effective application of monastic principles might have been made, by prudent and continuous means, to the great gatherings of workmen who had replaced the monks, and to these grand asylums of labour, where the regularity of the work, the morality of the workers, their intellectual satisfaction, and temporal and spiritual interests, assuredly require other guarantees than regulations purely material. But the world has remained insensible to the teachings of the past. With very rare exceptions,[3] the most undisguised materialism has everywhere replaced the lessons and recollections of spiritual life.

[1] God's Want, a convent of Nassau.

[2] Cistercian abbey in Perigord.

[3] Among these it is our duty to point out the manufactory conducted by M. Peigné-Delacour, at the ancient Cistercian abbey of Ourscamp, near Noyon, and that of MM. Séguin and Montgolfier, at the Abbey of Fontenet, near Montbard: these gentlemen have succeeded in uniting an active solicitude for the moral and physical wellbeing of their workmen, with the most intelligent respect for the admirable ruins of which they have become proprietors.

Upon the site of these monuments, created by disinterestedness and charity, or beside their ruins, there rises now some tame and ugly recent erection, designed to propagate the worship of gain, and, with it, the degradation of the soul. In the place of those communities where the dignity of the poor was so eloquently proclaimed, and where their sons walked hand in hand with the sons of kings and princes, the genius of cupidity has placed a kind of prison, where it too often exercises its ingenuity in finding out to what point it can drain away the strength of the artisan, reducing his wages by competition to the lowest possible rate, and his intelligence to its most restrained exercise, by the employment of machinery. Sometimes, also, the spinning-mill is installed under the roof of the ancient sanctuary. Instead of echoing night and day the praises of God, these dishonoured arches too often repeat only blasphemies and obscene cries, mingling with the shrill voice of the machinery, the grinding of the saw, or the monotonous clank of the piston. And upon these doors, heretofore open to all, where charity kept unwearied watch, we read in great letters, *It is forbidden to enter here without permission;*[1] and this for fear the secrets of this profaning manufacture may be purloined by some inopportune visitor or greedy rival.

Not thus were marked the gates of those monasteries of old, which remained to their last day accessible to all; where, far from sending away the poor and the traveller, they feared no indiscreet look, no untimely visit, thanks to the sentiment of pious and fraternal confidence which reigned everywhere, and which dictated that inscription, perceived by us some years ago upon the door of one of the

[1] We will not instance certain ancient abbeys of France where that inscription is still to be read, since we have visited them in spite of the prohibition. But we may recall how at Netley, a Cistercian abbey near Southampton, whose admirable ruins are very much frequented, the following edifying and encouraging inscription may be read, *Those who do not follow the beaten path will be prosecuted.*

dependencies of the Abbey of Morimondo, near Milan,[1] *Entra, o passaggiere! e prega Maria, madre di grazia.*

And even where, as most frequently happens, it is the agricultural class which has indirectly inherited these fruits of spoliation, is there not room for grave reflections? Who could venture to deny the incontestable progress of wellbeing and independence among our rural populations since 1798? Who does not applaud and admire their freer and happier condition? Where shall we find a man so unnatural as not to enjoy doubly his own free patrimony, in thinking that upon this soil of France, of which the monks were the first cultivators, all his fellows can, and ought, to reach the same comfort, thanks to the results of their own free labour? Still further, who does not foresee, with a happy certainty, the increase of that general comfort, if no new storms or economic errors come to interrupt the regular and natural progress of things? But which of these aspects of modern progress was incompatible with a respect to the right of property among the monks?

The monks have everywhere been the founders and precursors of the progress and wellbeing of the agricultural classes, by the relative superiority of their culture, and at the same time by the facility, and especially the permanence, of the conditions which they offered to the workers of the soil. Enlightened and competent witnesses are unanimous in establishing the universally beneficent influence of monastic property upon the populations which depended on them. The moral decay and spiritual irregularity of these communities have never derogated from the distinctive character of their existence, not even in places where a melancholy attachment to obsolete usages made them still maintain the remnants of serfage, which, however, were much less odious in reality than in principle. Even under this pretended servitude, with which the eighteenth century,

[1] The farm called *Casina Cantaluca di Ozero*, near the road from Abbiate Grasso to Pavia.

led by Voltaire, so much reproached the successors of the ancient monks of Jura,[1] the population subject to mortmain constantly increased, in spite of the sterility of the country, and the power, guaranteed to all, of seeking other masters.[2] "Experience teaches us," says an old historian, "that in the County of Burgundy, the peasants of the places under mortmain are much more comfortable than those who inhabit the free lands, and that the more their families increase, the richer they grow."[3] "Generally," says an erudite Protestant of our own days, "there was more ease and prosperity among them, and their families multiplied with fewer obstacles, than in the other class of cultivators."[4] The same phenomenon has been remarked everywhere; in England, immediately after the suppression of monasteries in the sixteenth century,[5] as in Belgium, where, during the eighteenth century, the Prémontrés created the agricultural

[1] See the definition which is given of it in the *Mémoires présentés au Roi contre le Chapitre de Saint Claude*, pp. 7, 21, 32, 143. These pretended serfs were only the descendants of ancient colonists, who had obtained only a partial enjoyment of the funds granted to them by the monks. They were subject only to such restrictions as trustees and liferenters underwent everywhere.

[2] ÉDOUARD CLERC, *Essai sur l'Histoire de la Franche-Comté* (rewarded by the Institute), 1842, t. i. p. 307.

[3] DUNOD, *Traité de la Main morte*, p. 15.

[4] DUVERNOY (of Montbéliard), quoted by Charrière, *Recherches sur Romainmoutier*, p. 296. Lausanne, 1855.—This same author says also: "Certainly the *main-morte* is not so hideous as some would-be philosophers of the eighteenth century have wished to depict it: I have said repeatedly that the lot of this class has been envied by many men of their time simply liable to the land-tax and statute labour. Personally, they were not less under the shield of those customs having the force of laws which governed inferiors, and their burdens and taxes were generally more supportable." He quotes elsewhere the celebrated passage from the letters of Peter the Venerable, where this doctor proves the difference between the lot of serfs subject to the monks, and those of the laity. Neither M. Duvernoy nor myself have the least intention of justifying the maintenance of any fragment whatever of serfage in the eighteenth century. But to overthrow that, was it therefore necessary to dispossess and proscribe those who had created French agriculture?

[5] COLLIER, t. ii. p. 108, ap. *Dublin Review*, t. xvi. p. 259.

prosperity of La Campine, by sending from the bosom of their abbeys, into all its parishes, curés who were, as says a historian of 1790, like so many professors of agriculture.[1] In Lombardy it was the monks, and principally the sons of St. Bernard, who taught the peasants the art of irrigation, and made that country the most fertile and rich in Europe.[2] In Spain and Portugal, all candid travellers, English or French, Protestants or free-thinkers, have not only recognised in monastic labour the principal origin of national agriculture, but have further proclaimed the constant prosperity of conventual lands, the excellence of the methods of culture there employed, their superiority in comparison with the domains of the crown or nobility, and, above all, the services rendered to the peasants by these industrious, persevering, and always resident proprietors, who consecrated the entire amount of their revenues to the working or to the improvement of their patrimony, and held the place of generous capitalists and indulgent lenders to the labourers of the country, in districts where capital was wanting, as it still is wanting in France, for agricultural enterprises.[3]

The low rate of the rents, which called and retained around each monastery agriculturists easy and prosperous,

[1] VERHOEVEN, *Mémoire sur la Constitution de la Nation*, Belgium, Liége, 1790, p. 79. This author adds that, after the suppressions of Joseph II., he has seen various monasteries, such as *Auwerghem*, *Groenendael Rouge-Cloître*, and *Sept-Fontaines*, become again literally dens of thieves as they had been before their foundation, as described in the diplomas of their benefactors. He says also that the suppression of the little priory of Corssendonck, situated in the poorest soil of Campine, has caused the poor peasants of the neighbourhood to desert it, p. 102.

[2] LAVEZARRI, *Elementi d'Agritoltura*, Milano, 1784; FUMAGALLI, *Antichita Lombardo-Milanesi*, Milano, 1791, t. ii. dist. 13.

[3] See CAVANILLAS, *Observaciones sobre la Historia Natural del Regno de Valencia*, Madrid, 1794, quoted by Gregory in his *Essay on the State of Agriculture in Europe;* BOURGOING, *Tableau de l'Espagne*, t. iii.; but above all, the work entitled *Portugal and Galicia*, by the Earl of Caernarvon, an English peer, one of the men who have best seen and studied the Peninsula during the stormy years from 1820 to 1828.

has been everywhere remarked upon monastic lands. Is it certain that these low rents have been maintained by their successors? Let us go further, and ask if it is certain, that the universal and permanent advantage of the inhabitants of the country has been consulted, in substituting everywhere for this rural ownership of the religious orders—always stable and never exacting (for there is not an example to the contrary), which resisted all attacks, and spread everywhere around it an increasing and enduring prosperity—the rapacity of individualism, the variations of industry, the mercantile and egotistic spirit of modern proprietorship, deprived even by the law which has constituted it of all foundation in the past, and every engagement towards the future? Again, it can enter into no one's intentions to rouse reaction against the fundamental institutions of modern society, to preach the universal re-establishment of great landed properties, or even of cultivation on a grand scale, and to generalise thus an order of things which, by its very nature, could and ought to be only exceptional. But must we absolutely refuse every asylum to the spirit of conservation, to the science of duration, and proscribe without exception all these oases of peace and disinterestedness? Must we render compulsory everywhere that circulation and division of the soil, which, pushed to extremity, destroys even the domestic hearth of one generation before it has had time to renew itself, and which, in a wider sense, teaches man only too easily how human society reduces itself into dust, and how property may have no aim or rule save the art of drawing out of it, without measure or relaxation, all that it will produce?

But let us suppose all these questions resolved against us: still we may at least inquire whether the mind most entirely satisfied by this manifest progress in material things, does not pause, doubtful and uncertain, when seeking an analogous progress in the morality and even intelligence of the population which has succeeded that which surrounded the

cloisters. There are, thank Heaven, exceptions everywhere: but if we inquired into the state of souls—if we sounded the consciences or scrutinised the intelligence of the people who have replaced the monks, what should we too often find there? Would it not be an ignorance of God, of the soul, of a better life and of eternity, too general and voluntary? an absorbing preoccupation in the lowest functions of human vitality? a wild application of the faculties of the soul to lucre? the exclusive worship of material instincts and profits? Upon this point, I fear, the testimony of bishops and rural priests would be as unanimous as indisputable. No, the rural classes have not gained in morality as they have increased in laborious comfort and legitimate independence. Alas! the dishonoured ruins of the monuments which we regret are often but too faithful an image of ruined consciences and ruined souls.

We can then affirm, without fear, that modern society has gained nothing, either morally or materially, by the savage, radical, and universal destruction of monastic institutions. Has intellectual culture profited more? Let us inquire where the taste for literature and study, the pursuit of the beautiful and true, the pure and upright knowledge, the true light of the mind, exists now, in those places heretofore occupied by the monks, where they had been first to carry the torch of study and knowledge, to the bosom of the plains, to the depths of the woods, to the summits of the mountains, and even into so many towns which owe to them all they have ever known of literary or scientific life. What remains of so many palaces raised in silence and solitude for the products of art, for the progress and pleasure of the mind, for disinterested labour? Masses of broken wall inhabited by owls and rats; shapeless remains; heaps of stones and pools of water. Everywhere desolation, filth, and disorder. No more studious retreats, no more vast galleries full of rich collections, no more pictures, no more painted windows, no more organs, no more chants, no more

libraries above all! no more of books than of alms and prayer!

And what have the poor gained by it? The reply is too easy and too painful. That they have reaped no advantage becomes specially apparent in those sites where we would fain invite the destroyers and detractors of the monastic orders to discuss with them the value of their work. In places where once was found a refuge, an hospice, an hospital, a fireside always open and always bright for all miseries and all weaknesses; where, at the end of a hard day's journey or work, the evening bell announced to the poor and fatigued traveller a benevolent and assured[1] reception, what do we find to-day? One of three things: most frequently a ruin, without either shelter or consolation for any one; sometimes a private dwelling closely shut up, where there is nothing either to receive or to demand; at the best, an inn, where it is necessary to pay for everything.

But, above all, what has been gained by the State, by the public power, whose irresistible name and arm have everywhere consummated the outrage conceived and calculated by private hate and avarice? Admitting, for a moment, the right of the State to seize upon private property, the most sacred and inviolable property; supposing it, by a possible agreement with the Church, legitimate master of these immense spoils; and placing ourselves at a point of view merely political and material, how shall we justify the use it has made of them? How shall we explain those sales, made bit by bit, for ridiculous prices—that instantaneous and barren crumbling down of so much solid, durable, and fertile capital—otherwise than by the imaginary necessity

[1] In Germany, especially, where travelling has always been more than elsewhere a national habit with the lower classes, monasteries afforded them gratuitous inns. We saw even lately, in the profaned enclosure of Wessobrünn, in Bavaria, dormitories divided into small rooms, and reserved, some for poor students, others for poor workmen who came there to sleep. See upon that transformation an excellent work in the *Feuilles Politiques et Historiques* of GOERRES and PHILLIPS, vol. xxiii. p. 821.

and wicked determination to identify the cause of revolution with new interests and individual covetousness? I appeal to all economists worthy of the name, to all who have managed public affairs or seriously studied great social questions: was this what should have been done? Should not an attempt have been made to put aside these enormous common funds for public necessities and general interests? The orphans, the deserted foundlings, the poor lunatics, the deaf and dumb, the blind, the old sailors, the old field-labourers, the old soldiers of labour and industry, so many different miseries which modern civilisation creates or discovers every day, and which she owes it to herself to take in charge, because she has everywhere enervated the freedom and the initiative of private charity—had not they acquired a claim upon these treasures amassed by the charity of the past?

But no! Hatred of the past, blind hatred of all that endures, of all that comes from afar, of all that has a sacred origin, has swept away all the calculations of foresight, and the well-understood interests of the State, as well as those of the laborious and indigent masses. They have preferred to slay at a blow the goose of the golden eggs! They have destroyed the capital of ages, the inviolable trust of Christian nations, of charitable families, of knowledge, labour, and virtue. By the same blow has the future been sacrificed and the past calumniated. And they hold themselves justified by declamations upon *Mort-main*, that is to say, upon that immortal hand which has given life to the most durable and fertile creations of Christian genius.

Let us admit even that the crime or blindness of the destroyers of the sixteenth or eighteenth century might find an excuse or explanation; there is none for those who, after the cruel experiences which contemporary Europe has passed through, and in presence of the menaces of the future, persevere in the same course.

By what madness could we explain the renewal of perse-

cution and prohibition against the new germs, born again, but still so few and feeble, of cloistral life? against the only men who, in our society, would be content with their lot; who would use their liberty only to abdicate all ambition and lucre, and seek, as the height of their desires, abstinence, mortification, and voluntary poverty, while all around them resounds with the glorification of wealth and of the flesh?

Yet how much have we seen, for some years past, in France and everywhere around us, even in Spanish America, of these mad persecutors, less intelligent and more perverse even than their predecessors, who aggravate unceasingly their ignorant hatred and obsolete calumnies to obtain new proscriptions! How many politicians, legislators, and magistrates could we name, who have obstinately maintained a cruel interdiction, aided by annoyances derived at the same time from the Roman tax-gatherers and the Spanish Inquisition, against all the attempts of Christian devotedness to re-establish the cloistral life! Incapable themselves of the least sacrifice for God, they madly pursue those who demonstrate, by their example, that such sacrifices are still possible; they would fain banish for ever into the past, as a dream and aberration, such fidelity to evangelical counsels.

It is the *esprit de corps*, the vitality of association, that force, increased tenfold by a life in common, which the Church has always produced, and in which she always renews herself, that they specially pursue in her. It is for this, above all, that they set themselves to confine and thwart her. They are willing to let her live, but to live mutilated. They treat her like a prisoner of war, like a captive garrison, whom they divest of their arms and banners, to make them pass under the Caudine Forks.

Hypocritical advocates of a liberty which they have never understood, they proscribe the supreme act of liberty. "What folly and cruelty!" said St. Peter Damien eight hundred years ago: "a man has the power of disposing freely of his goods, but he shall not have that of offering

himself to God! He has a right to give up all his fortune to other men, and they refuse him the liberty of giving up his soul to God, from whom it came!"[1]

I stood in Grenada one day, in the Albaycin, at the gate of the convent of *Santa Isabel la Real*, founded by Isabella the Catholic in memory of her conquests, still occupied by its noble inhabitants, but condemned to self-extinction, the dictatorship of Espartero having interdicted them, as well as all the other convents in Spain, from receiving novices. A woman approached and explained to me that savage interdict: then, extending her hand towards the condemned convent, and flashing on it one of those burning glances which cannot be forgotten, she exclaimed, with the accent of a Roman and the ardour of a Spaniard, these two words, *Suma tirania!* She was right: tyranny has invented nothing more oppressive than this stifling of devotion, chastity, and charity in the human soul. Let us believe, for the honour of the human species, that posterity will repeat that sentence, and define by the two words of the indignant Spanish woman the policy and justice of these comedians of liberty, when they shall stand finally unmasked before its eyes.

Besides, the Son of God has already pronounced their sentence: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."[2]

[1] "Quæ est illa dementia, quæ vesania, quæ crudelitas! Habet homo disponendarum rerum suarum liberam facultatem, ut semetipsum Deo offerat potestatem non habet! Valet hominibus tradere substantiam suam, non habet libertatem Deo redere animam suam!"—S. PETR. DAMIAN., *Opusc.* 15. This saint certainly did not foresee that they would come one day to proscribe, in Catholic countries, the practice of monastic life. He addressed these words to bishops, who wished only to exempt from the vow of embracing religious life those who might have done it believing themselves mortally ill, and who should afterwards be restored to health.

[2] Matt. xxiii. 13.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRUE AND FALSE MIDDLE AGES

Primam esse historiæ legem, ne quid falsi dicere audeat; deinde ne quid veri non audeat.—CICERO, *De Orat.* iii. 15.

BUT let us leave, for a time, these memorials of ruin and oppression. It is neither the decay nor the fall; it is the youth and flourishing maturity of the monastic order that we have to relate. This narrative carries us into, and will detain us long in, the bosom of that grand era of the middle ages, which is the perpetual object of opinions so impassioned and diverse. In the time of its greatest splendour the monastic order was only one of the branches of that great Christian society, governed by the Church and the feudal system, which has reigned successively in all the countries of the West, from Gregory the Great down to Joan of Arc.

We are necessarily led to study and appreciate this vast conjunction of Christian institutions, doctrines, and manners, when we approach the history of the religious orders; and we feel the necessity of rendering to it also complete and definitive justice. But here, as elsewhere, profound admiration, deliberate and avowed, does not exclude the most complete and severe impartiality. God forbid that we should imitate our adversaries, those men who hate and denounce the preponderance of Catholic faith and truth in the middle ages! God preserve us from forgetting or concealing the sombre and vicious side of that period, from proclaiming only its splendours and virtues, and from turning thus against its detractors the disloyal and lying method which they have

used so long, of keeping silent upon all its grand and noble features, and pointing out to the execration of posterity only its abuses and disorders. To be impartial it is necessary to be complete. To show only the vices of a human creature, or a historic period, is to betray truth; but it is equally so to show nothing but the virtues.

The most important point is, to distinguish carefully between the middle ages and the epoch which followed, and which is commonly called the *ancien régime;* and to protest against the confusion which ignorance on one side, and on the other the policy of absolutism, has introduced between two phases of history, totally different, and even hostile to each other. To believe, for example, that the fourteen centuries of our history which preceded the French Revolution, have developed only the same class of institutions and ideas, is to go in the face of truth and fact. The *ancien régime*, by the triumph of absolute monarchy in all the kingdoms of the European continent, had slain the middle ages: but instead of rejecting and trampling under foot the robes of its victim, it adorned itself with them, and was still thus arrayed when it came, in its turn, to be overthrown. Time and space fail us to insist upon this truth, which becomes more and more evident, in proportion as the paths of history are cleared from all those errors with which superficial writers have encumbered them. But it is important to free the true middle ages, in their Catholic splendour, from all affinity with the theory and practice of that renewed old pagan despotism which still here and there contends with modern liberty; and this distinction should be specially recalled in presence of all those historic phantasmagoria which, after having so long assimilated the kings of the middle ages to modern monarchs, exhibiting Clovis and Dagobert to us as princes of the fashion of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., have all at once turned round, and attempt to make us regard Louis XIV. and Philip V. as the natural and legitimate representatives of St. Louis and St. Fer-

dinand. An attentive study of facts and institutions will convince every sincere observer that there is less difference between the order of things destroyed in 1789 and modern society, than between the Christianity of the middle ages and the *ancien régime*.

That *ancien régime* corrupted, enslaved, and often despoiled all that it had not killed, and the religious orders suffered that fate as much as, or more than, any other institution of Christianity.

It is not necessary to go far back to find a time in which all the great social forces, even those whose roots penetrate furthest into the Catholic middle ages, and which the modern mind is accustomed to confound with that period, were unanimous in disavowing any sympathy or affinity with the previous age, and in which the intelligence of that age, withdrawing from them, abandoned them, discrowned and disarmed, to the perils of the future. It was then that the throne, misled by servile lawyers and historians, renounced the Christian humility of the kings of the middle ages; that the nobility, unfaithful to the traditions of their furthest back and most illustrious ancestors, sought their glory and life only in the royal favour; that the clergy themselves blushed for the ages, named *barbarous* by their own writers, in which, however, the Church had been so strong and flourishing, so free and so respected, so well obeyed and loved. Yes, ignorance, or, if you prefer it, historical carelessness, had so infected even the sanctuary, that the clergy, exclusively preoccupied with wrongs and disorders, which we should be careful not to deny, did not hesitate to sacrifice the highest glories of their order to the rancour and prejudices of the world. It must be said, in order to verify all that we have gained; in everything which concerns the most heroic struggles of the Church during nearly two centuries, we had accepted on their own word the lies of our tyrants, and had served as their echo. Multitudes of Christians, of priests, of Catholic doctors, were to be found,

who, ranging themselves with enthusiasm on the strongest side, had taken the part of evil against good, and transformed lay tyranny into an innocent victim of the Church. It is scarcely a hundred years since French bishops expressed in their charges the wish to see *the enterprises of Gregory VII. buried in eternal oblivion!*[1] Fleury, so long the oracle of ecclesiastical history, put his vast knowledge and incontestable talents at the service of the enemies of Rome, and dared to say, in beginning his description of the ages which intervened between St. Benedict and St. Bernard, that *the great times of the Church are past.*[2] Whilst Voltaire decreed the untoward tribute of his praises to such decisions,[3] no one, in France at least, ventured openly to combat them. We must even admit that it is not the clergy who have given to history that new and salutary impulse which has animated it for forty years, and served the cause of the Church so well. They have rather suffered, than inspired, the vindication of the middle ages. That work, so indispensable to the honour and enfranchisement of Catholicism, has been begun by Protestants,[4] by indifferent persons, sometimes even by declared adversaries. It has been specially carried out by laymen.[5] Perhaps it is by some

[1] Charges of the Bishops of Verdun and Troy, in 1728.

[2] Discourses on the state of the Church from 600 to 1100.

[3] He has said of Fleury: "His history of the Church is the best that has ever been written, and the preliminary discourses are very much superior to history." It is true Fleury has not yet been surpassed as a historian of the Church, but he understood absolutely nothing of the social and moral constitution of the Christian people of the middle ages. His influence has notwithstanding outweighed every other in France as out of it; and I would only quote one curious example of it, that of an English Catholic priest, Dr. Berington, author of a *Literary History of the Middle Ages*, reprinted in 1846, who treats the Crusades as a *contagious extravagance*, and declares that the only result of them has been the importation to the West of Oriental fables, from which the imagination of bard and troubadour had been able to draw new aliment.

[4] In France, M. Guizot; in Germany, Jean de Müller, Voigt, Leo, Hurter, the two Menzels.

[5] The best book to make the middle age known and loved is the work

secret and beneficent purpose of supreme Truth that the profane, and men who are strangers to the true faith, have been the first and most ardent to study and admire those great and profoundly Catholic ages.

But perhaps, also, it is to the absence and silence of the clergy in the beginning of this unforeseen and brilliant return to historic truth, that we must attribute the untoward character which has diminished its value in the eyes of many pious Christians. In giving up to the poets, artists, and novelists the exclusive right of using, with no very exalted purpose, the treasures of an age in which the Church governed and inspired everything, Catholics have permitted the study of the middle ages to degenerate into a kind of fashion, exaggerated and ephemeral, a frivolous and puerile rage for its furniture, statues, and stained glass, parodying the exterior, the costume, and the language of a time, whose fundamental characteristics these explorers affect to ignore, and whose faith, especially, they will neither profess nor practise. How few among us have approached the middle ages with that tender and profound respect which should conduct us to the sepulchre of our ancestors, to the monuments of their glory, to the cradle of our spiritual and moral life! Perchance it might be better to let that past sleep, under the dust and disdain with which modern paganism has covered it, than to resuscitate it for the fitting out of a museum.

However this may be, a great progress is manifest, and continues every day. The study of the middle ages has become more and more general, serious, and popular. Its

of a layman, and of a layman gone over from Anglicanism to the Church. It is the collection already quoted, and entitled *Mores Catholici, or the Centuries of Faith*, by Kenelm Digby, London, 1831 to 1843, 10 volumes. It is right to acknowledge that the defective aspect of the middle ages (what the Germans so justly call *die Schattenzeite*) has not been sufficiently brought to light by Mr. Digby. Read on this subject the sage reflections of the excellent American writer, Brownson, in his *Quarterly Review*, Boston, July 1849.

historical vindication progresses, and works itself out. Those who, first among the Catholics, put their hands to this task five-and-twenty years ago, have due reason for congratulation. At that time much courage was necessary to brave prejudices which were universal, and to all appearance invincible, and bold perseverance to overcome the scorn of ignorance and routine, and some perspicacity to divine that the wind was about to change, and that its breath would rekindle the true light. The hands of enemies have themselves largely contributed to that unhoped-for victory. Illustrious adversaries of Catholicism have popularised periods, races, and personages which last century had condemned to eternal scorn and oblivion. Penetrating into the catacombs of history, they have dug and cleared out many unknown or lost ways, and have brought back inestimable materials for the work of reparation. Perhaps they expected to have sealed the tomb of their victim for the last time under these stones, which serve every day to reconstruct the sanctuary of historic truth.

Thanks to them, above all, we know now what to believe concerning the *barbarity of the middle ages feudal anarchy* and most of the invectives cast upon the Christian society by accusers who have designedly forgotten or misconceived her first motives. With Catholics, especially, the revolution is complete; among them we scarcely find sufficient opposition to verify the triumph. They have taken up again the sentiment of their historical honour and patrimony. But how many efforts and struggles are still necessary against the ocean of vulgar prejudices, against the decision of hate and voluntary ignorance! Amongst the clergy as amongst laymen, many industrious writers continue a task which we must beware of believing achieved. The legitimate and imprescriptible insurrection of truth against error is not the work of a day, and a victory so desirable cannot be achieved so quickly or so perfectly. We require to have our arsenal filled every day with the serious arguments and irrefutable

demonstrations of honest knowledge, and we help to reconquer our forgotten glories when we increase the riches of historical truth.

Meanwhile, though there is still much remaining to be done for the consolidation of that conquest and arrangement of its riches, we already see the result compromised by that disastrous fickleness which belongs to the French character, and which extends even into the sphere of religion! Men have passed from one excess to another, from one pole of error to the opposite pole, from a contempt founded upon ignorance, to a blind, exclusive, and no less ignorant admiration. They have made an imaginary *moyen-âge*, in which they have placed the ideal of those daring theories and retrograde passions, which have been brought to light by the downfalls and recantations of our last times. The school of literature which has launched a decree of proscription against the great works of classic antiquity, comes to swell the ranks of that school of politics which has returned with a desperate confidence towards force as the best ally of faith, which has placed religion and society under that humiliating guardianship, and which takes a perverse pleasure in crushing human conscience and human dignity under strange and insupportable pretensions. Disdaining the reality of facts, and of all the authentic monuments of the past, both take delight in seeking weapons against the right of reason and of freedom, in recollections of those middle ages which their own imagination has falsified; and both have slandered the Christendom of our ancestors, by representing it as the model of that intellectual and social condition of which they dream, and which they preach to the modern world.

And immediately, by a natural reaction, the old prejudices and declamations against the ages of faith have regained life and favour. The ill-extinguished and scarcely disguised animosity of those who yielded to the laws of recent impartiality rather from regard to good taste than from conviction, blazes up anew. To the indignation excited in many minds

by the reawaking of those helots who were supposed to be resigned and habituated to the abnegation of their ancient glory and liberty, is added the natural uneasiness of all who rely upon the legitimate conquests and progress of modern intelligence. By combining the vindication of the middle ages with the apotheosis of contemporary servitude, a horror of the Catholic past has been reanimated, strengthened, and, in appearance, justified. The cause which seemed to be gained is once more put in question, and even in risk of being lost again. Passion and hatred have again found a pretext and refuge—they constitute themselves the auxiliaries of betrayed liberty, menaced conscience, and reason outraged and justly alarmed.[1]

The laborious and conscientious worker in this great and good cause has thus too often good reason to pause, sad and discouraged, when he perceives the volcano which he had supposed extinguished reopen, to throw forth, as heretofore, calumny and outrage against the truth; but sadder still when he sees that truth condemned, by superficial and rash apologists, to an unworthy alliance with baseness, fear, and voluntary blindness. These last have cruelly complicated the task of the upright man, who would defend and avenge the truth without becoming the accomplice of any persecution or servitude. Perhaps he is not warranted in saying to them, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of;" but he is at least entitled to establish the fact that he is not, and

[1] "Those infamous middle ages, the disgrace of civilisation and dishonour to the human mind."—*Journal des Debats* of the 27th November 1854. "When we see a spirit which is nourished by rancour and hatred against liberty, progress, and tolerance, show itself among certain persons in a certain party, who shelter themselves under cover of the good old times, we ask ourselves whether it would not be better to abstain from all demonstration of sympathy for manners, usages, and institutions, which are condemned to suffer such a patronage, and such friends."—*Revue de l'Instruction Publique* of the 11th December 1856. "His ideal was not in this legendary demi-day grey and sombre, in which the thin and wan figures of the middle ages move."—*Revue Chrétienne* of the 15th November 1859.

never was, of their camp; that he neither follows the same path nor bears the same flag. He would willingly speak with the prophet of "the wall between me and them."[1] For there are times when it is needful that he should separate himself, with the melancholy and resolution of the patriarch when he said to his nearest relative, "Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."[2]

The middle ages stand unfortunately between two camps at the deepest enmity with each other, which only agree in misconstruing it. The one hate it, because they believe it an enemy to all liberty: the other praise it, because they seek arguments and examples there, to justify the universal servitude and prostration which they extol. Both are agreed to travesty and insult it, the one by their invectives, the other by their eulogiums.

I affirm that both deceive themselves, and that they are equally and profoundly ignorant of the middle ages, which were an epoch of faith, but also a period of strife, of discussion, of dignity, and above all, of freedom.

The error common to both admirers and detractors of the middle ages consists in seeing there the reign and triumph of theocracy. It was, they tell us, a time distinguished for ever by human impotence, and by the glorious dictatorship of the Church.[3]

I deny the dictatorship, and I still more strongly deny the human impotence.

Humanity was never more fertile, more manful, more potent; and as for the Church, she has never seen her authority more contested in practice, even by those who recognised it most dutifully in theory.

[1] Ezek. xliii. 8. [2] Gen. xiii. 9.

[3] DONOSO CORTÈS, *Réponse à M. Albert de Broglie*, in the Spanish edition of his works.

Unity of faith was the reigning principle then, as unity of civil law and national constitution is the reigning principle of the present time, in all modern nations. But among a free people, like England or the United States, where do we see that civil and social unity stifle the vitality, the energy, the individual and collective independence? It was thus with the Catholic unity of the middle ages. It quenched in no degree either political or intellectual life. The uniformity of a worship universally popular, the tender and sincere submission of hearts and minds to revealed truth and the teachings of the Church, excluded no prepossession for, no discussion of, the most elevated and difficult questions of philosophy and morality. The principle of authority implied no rupture, either with the free genius of antiquity, so faithfully and ardently cultivated (as we shall prove) in the Benedictine cloisters, nor with the natural and progressive development of the human mind. Need we recall the immense developments of scholasticism, those exercises of intelligence at once so bold and subtile, so propitious, despite their undeniable blanks, to the force and elasticity of argument? Need we enumerate those great, numerous, and powerful universities, so full of life, so free, sometimes even so rebellious, where the independence of the masters was equalled only by that of an ardent and turbulent youth, attacking every day a thousand questions, which would terrify the suspicious orthodoxy of our days? Need we adduce, finally, the liberty, and even licence, of those satires, which, in the popular and chivalrous poetry, in fables and songs, even in the products of art which were consecrated to worship, carried almost to excess the right of public criticism and discussion?[1]

[1] See on this subject the curious book of M. Lenient, *La Satire en France au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1859; and the history *De la Fable Ésopique* of M. Edélestand du Méril, which serves as an introduction to his *Poésies Inédites du Moyen Age;* and, in short, all the recent volumes of the *Histoire Littéraire de France*, continued by the Academy of Inscriptions.

In those times so ridiculously calumniated, a devouring desire to work and to learn animated all minds. The heroic and persevering ardour which carried the Marco Polos and Plancarpins to the extremities of the known world, through distances and dangers which our contemporaries have lost the power of conceiving, inspired travellers not less intrepid in the regions of thought. The human mind exercised itself with Gerbert and Scotus Erigena in the most arduous and delicate problems. The most orthodox, such as St. Anselm and St. Thomas Aquinas, shrank before none of the difficulties of psychology or metaphysics. Some might be led astray into audacious theories, hostile to the spirit of the Church and the Gospel. But not an individual, we can affirm boldly, resigned himself to the abdication or slumber of reason.

Let us go further, and ask if, to-day, despite printing, despite the happy but insufficient progress of popular education, despite our apparent universal acquaintance with the sciences and arts, if it is entirely certain that the necessary equilibrium between material cares and the moral life of the world is as well maintained as then. Let us ask if the spiritual element of human nature, cultivation of ideas, moral enthusiasm, all the noble life of thought, is as well represented, as energetically developed, and as abundantly provided for among ourselves as among our ancestors. For my own part, I permit myself to doubt it; and I believe that, well considered and compared, no period has more richly endowed and more ardently cultivated the domains of the mind and soul, than the middle ages.

Religion, it is true, governed all; but she stifled nothing. She was not banished into a corner of society, immured within the enclosure of her own temples, or of individual conscience. On the contrary, she was invited to animate, enlighten, and penetrate everything with the spirit of life; and, after she had set the foundations of the edifice upon a base which could not be shaken, her maternal hand returned

to crown its summit with light and beauty. None were placed too high to obey her, and none fell so low as to be out of reach of her consolations and protection. From the king to the hermit, all yielded at some time to the sway of her pure and generous inspirations. The memory of Redemption, of that debt contracted towards God by the race which was redeemed on Calvary, mingled with everything, and was to be found in all institutions, in all monuments, and at certain moments in all hearts. The victory of charity over selfishness, of humility over pride, of spirit over flesh, of all that is elevated in our nature over all the ignoble and impure elements included in it, was as frequent as human weakness permitted. That victory is never complete here below; but we can affirm without fear that it never was approached so closely. Since the first great defiance thrown down by the establishment of Christianity to the triumph of evil in the world, never perhaps has the empire of the devil been so much shaken and contested.

Must we then conclude that the middle ages are the ideal period of Christian society? Ought we to see there the normal condition of the world? God forbid! In the first place, there never has been, and never will be, a normal state or irreproachable epoch in this earth. And, besides, if that ideal could be realised here below, it is not in the middle ages that it has been attained. These ages have been called the ages of faith; and they have been justly so called, for faith was more sovereign then than in any other epoch of history. But there we must stop. This is much, but it is enough for the truth. We cannot venture to maintain that virtue and happiness have been throughout these ages on a level with faith. A thousand incontrovertible witnesses would rise up to protest against such a rash assertion, to recall the general insecurity, the too frequent triumphs of violence, iniquity, cruelty, deceit, sometimes even of refined depravity; to demonstrate that the human and even diabolical elements reasserted only too strongly their ascendancy

in the world. By the side of the opened heavens, hell always appeared; and beside those prodigies of sanctity which are so rare elsewhere, were to be found ruffians scarcely inferior to those Roman emperors whom Bossuet calls "monsters of the human race."

The Church, which is always influenced, up to a certain point, by contemporary civilisation, endured many abuses and scandals, the very idea of which would to-day horrify both her children and her enemies. They proceeded sometimes from that corruption which is inseparable from the exercise of great power and the possession of great wealth; sometimes, and most frequently, from the invasions of the lay spirit and temporal power. Yes, cupidity, violence, and debauchery revolted often, and with success, against the yoke of the Gospel, even among its own ministers; they infected even the organs of the law promulgated to repress them. We can and ought to confess it without fear, because the evil was almost always overcome by the good; because all these excesses were redeemed by marvels of self-denial, penitence, and charity; because beside every fall is found an expiation; for every misery an asylum; to every wickedness some resistance. Sometimes in cells of monasteries, sometimes in caves of the rocks; here, under the tiara or the mitre; there, under the helmet and coat-of-arms, thousands of souls fought with glory and perseverance the battles of the Lord, fortifying the feeble by their example, reviving the enthusiasm even of those who neither wished nor knew how to imitate them, and displaying over the vices and disorders of the crowd the splendid light of their prodigious austerity, their profuse charity, their unwearied love of God. But all this dazzling light of virtue and sanctity ought not to blind us to what lay beneath. There were more saints, more monks, and, above all, more believers, than in our days; but I do not hesitate to say that there were fewer priests, I mean good priests. Yes; the secular clergy of the middle ages were less pure, less exemplary than ours;

the episcopate was less respectable, and the spiritual authority of the Holy See much less sovereign than now. This assertion will, perhaps, astonish some in their ignorant admiration; but it is not the less easy to prove it. The pontifical power has, at the present time, subjects less numerous, but infinitely more docile. What it has lost in extent, it has more than gained in intensity.

And besides this, the dominion of the Church, usurped by some, disputed by others, and balanced by a crowd of rival or vassal authorities, was never all-powerful nor uncontested. She saw her laws perpetually violated, her discipline altered, her rights scorned, not only in temporal matters but in spiritual; not as now, by declared enemies, but by the so-called faithful, who, when their pride or their interest required it, knew how to brave her thunders with as much coolness as the *esprits forts* of our own time. The true grandeur and strength of the Church of the middle ages lay, not in her wealth or power, not in being loved, served, and protected by princes, but in her freedom. She was free by right of the general liberty, such as was comprehended and practised in those days, which belonged to all corporations and proprietors; she enjoyed the largest amount of freedom known, because she was at the same time the greatest corporation and the largest landowner in Europe. This freedom, which has always been the first guarantee of her majesty, of her fruitfulness, of her duration, the first condition of her life, she possessed more completely then, than at any previous period; and never (save in those few States where modern liberty has been able to shake off all superannuated fetters) has she possessed it to the same degree since. And as the destinies and rights of the Church and each Christian soul are identical, never was the soul more free, free to do good, to give itself to God, to sacrifice itself to its neighbour. From thence come these marvels of devotion, of charity, and of sanctity, which charm and dazzle us.

But it would be the most complete and inexcusable error to imagine that this liberty was universally recognised and uncontested. On the contrary, it lived and triumphed only in the midst of storms. It was necessary to struggle for it unceasingly, to wrest it from the grasp of lay pretensions and rivalries, from the dominion of temporal interests. The Church was, besides, happily and usefully "restrained by civil liberty, which kept her from degenerating into a dominant theocracy."[1] We must then acknowledge that the Church had never, and in no place, an absolute and permanent supremacy—that she has never, and nowhere, seen her adversaries annihilated or chained at her feet. This was precisely the pledge of her long and glorious influence, her lasting ascendancy, her blessed action upon souls and laws. She required to be always in resistance, always renewing herself by effort. During the entire course of the true middle ages, the Church never ceased her struggle for a single day; it was granted her oftener to vanquish than to fall back; she never underwent a complete defeat; but never either could she lie down to sleep in the pride of triumph, or in the enervating peace of dictatorship.

Never, then, was anything more false and puerile than the strange pretence maintained by certain tardy supporters of the Catholic *renaissance*, of presenting the middle ages to us as a period in which the Church was always victorious and protected; as a promised land flowing with milk and honey, governed by kings and nobles piously kneeling before the priests, and by a devout, silent, and docile crowd, tranquilly stretched out under the crook of their pastors, to sleep in the shade, under the double authority of the inviolably respected throne and altar. Far from that, there never were greater passions, more disorders, wars, and revolts; but at the same time there were never greater virtues, more generous efforts for the service of goodness.

[1] LACORDAIRE, Comparison of the Flaviens and Capétiens, in the *Correspondent* of the 25th June 1859.

All was war, dangers, and tempests, in the Church as in the State; but all was likewise strong, robust, and vivacious: everything bore the impression of life and strife. On one side faith, a faith sincere, *naïve*, simple, and vigorous, without hypocrisy as without insolence, neither servile nor narrow-minded, exhibiting every day the imposing spectacle of strength in humility; on the other, institutions militant and manful, which, amid a thousand defects, had the admirable virtue of creating men, not valets or pious eunuchs, and which one and all ordained these men to action, to sacrifice, and continual exertions. Strong natures everywhere vigorously nourished, and in no direction stifled, quenched, or disdained, found their place there with ease and simplicity. Feeble natures, with the fibre relaxed, found there the most fitting regimen to give them vigour and tone. Worthy people, relying upon a master who undertook to defend all by silencing or enchaining their adversaries, were not to be seen there. We cannot look upon these Christians as on good little lambs, bleating devoutly among wolves, or taking courage between the knees of the shepherd. They appear, on the contrary, like athletes, like soldiers engaged every day in fighting for the most sacred possessions; in a word, like men armed with the most robust personality and individual force, unfettered as undecaying.

If, then, the middle ages deserve to be admired, it is precisely for reasons which would bring upon them the condemnation of their recent panegyrists, if they understood better what their enthusiasm, by mere misconstruction, extols.

I admit, on the other hand, that these times may well appear frightful to eyes which appreciate order and discipline above everything else, provided they give their consent to my proposition that its virtues and courage were heroic. I admit that its violence was almost continual, its superstition sometimes ridiculous, its ignorance too widely spread, and its wickedness too often unpunished; provided you grant

to me, in return, that the consciousness of human dignity has never been more vividly impressed in the depths of men's hearts, and that the first of all forces, and the only one really to be respected, the strength of the soul, has never reigned with less disputed supremacy.

As for those among its detractors who accuse the Catholics past of the Western races of being incompatible with freedom, we can oppose to them the unanimous testimony, not only of all historical monuments, but of all those democratic writers of our own day who have profoundly studied this past; above all, of M. Augustin Thierry, who has shown so well how many barriers and guarantees had to be overthrown by royalty before it would establish its universal sway. This ancient world was bristling with liberty. The spirit of resistance, the sentiment of individual right, penetrated it entirely; and it is this, which always and everywhere constitutes the essence of freedom. That freedom had established everywhere a system of counterpoise and restraint, which rendered all prolonged despotism absolutely impossible. But its special guarantees were two principles which modern society has renounced—the principles of *hérédité* and association. Besides, they appear to us under the form of privileges, which is enough to prevent many from understanding or admiring them.

Certainly the misfortunes, disappointments, and stains of modern liberty, should not weaken the faithful love which she inspires in generous souls. No fault, no grievance ought to detach those whom she has once warmed with her love. But, at the same time, these faults and grievances compel us to be modest and indulgent in regard to the restrained or imperfect forms in which she has been clothed among our fathers. Liberty had no existence then in the condition of a theory or abstract principle applied to the general mass of humanity, to all nations, even those who neither desire nor know her. But freedom was a fact and a right to many men, to a larger number than possess her

now; and for all who appreciated and wished for her, was much more easy both to acquire and to preserve.

To whom is freedom especially necessary? To individuals and to minorities. They found her, during these ages, under limits which the mutual control of natural or traditional forces imposed upon all authority and sovereignty whatsoever. They found her specially in the happy multiplicity of those small states, those independent monarchies, those provincial or municipal republics, which have always been bulwarks of the dignity of man, and the theatre of his most salutary exertions; where the courageous and capable citizen finds the greatest scope for his legitimate ambition, and where he is less swallowed up and lost in the general mass than in great states.

Further, our proud ancestors ignored the very idea of that unlimited power of the State which is now so ardently appealed to, or easily accepted everywhere. What have been called "the necessary evils of unlimited monarchy,"[1] were nowhere recognised among them. Since then the unity and absolute independence of sovereign power have replaced in the world the sentiment and guarantees of personal liberty. The better to attain and secure equality, we have applied ourselves to the work of suppressing all little states and local existence, of breaking every link which unites us to ancient freedom. All connection has been cast aside with the traditions of dignity and right which she has produced. A dead level has been regarded as a mark of progress, and identity of yoke as a guarantee. It has been said, in so many words, that the triumph of the despotism of one is better than the maintenance of the liberty of many. People will put up with a master, in order to have no chiefs; and have voted the death of right, in fear of aiding the resurrection of privilege. They have succeeded; an equality like that of China has been attained; and we

[1] AUGUSTIN THIERRY, *Introduction aux Monuments de l'Histoire du Tiers-Etat*, p. 244, 4to.

know too well what price must be paid for that acquisition, and how much honour and liberty it leaves behind to the nations which have yielded to its sway. *Receperunt mercedem suam, vani vanam.*

God forbid, despite the appearances and melancholy teachings of this actual time—God forbid that we should assert equality to be incompatible with liberty; but up to the present time the art of making them live and last together has not been discovered in any of the great countries of the European continent. We should therefore exercise forbearance, at least, toward an age in which, without caring for an equality which no one claimed or dreamt of, men possessed the sentiment and use of freedom, which they knew how to reconcile more or less with authority, as variety was reconciled with unity, and a profound respect for individual right with the force and fruitfulness of the spirit of association.

It was the energetic and manly character of their institutions and men, which secured the reign of liberty in the middle ages. We have already pointed this out, but we cannot revert to it too often. Everything there breathes freedom, health, and life—all is full of vigour, force, and youth. 'Tis like the first burst of nature, whose spontaneous vigour had not yet been robbed of any portion of its grace and charm. We see limpid and healthful currents everywhere springing forth and extending themselves. They encounter a thousand obstacles and embarrassments upon their way: but almost always they surmount and overthrow these, to carry afar the fertilising virtue of their waters.

A generous leaven ferments in the bosom of that apparent confusion. Virtue and truth take the lead, by sustained efforts, and the prolonged sacrifices of a multitude of admirable souls. We discover unceasingly, and contemplate with joy, these unwearied souls devoted to a constant struggle against evil, and all oppressions and tyrannies, laboriously initiated into the triumphs of moral force, and heroically

faithful to that faith in God's justice which it is so necessary but so difficult to maintain while waiting here below for the rare and uncertain manifestations of that justice in history.

In our days, it is true, we have destroyed all the institutions and superior powers whose duration and grandeur weighed often with too heavy a burden upon the common mass of men. But what inestimable resources for the strength and happiness of the people have we not condemned to annihilation with them! How often have we acted like those insane destroyers, who, under pretext of exterminating the birds of prey, have unpeopled the forest of its guests, of its songs, of its life, and overthrown the harmony of nature? You think you have got rid of the eagles? Be it so! But who shall free you now from the reptiles and venomous insects?

Once more, let me assert that I would not deny the violences, abuses, and crimes of that misunderstood past. In the course of my narrative these will be very apparent. I deny none of the advantages, the progress, and real benefits which have resulted from the change of manners and ideas in modern society. Such indisputable and most fortunate advantages do exist, in the comfort of the inferior classes, the improvement of manners, the administration of justice, the general security, the abolition of many atrocious penalties against spiritual and temporal errors, the happy impotency of fanaticism and religious persecution, the shorter and less cruel wars, and the universal respect for the rights of humanity. I only question whether there may not have been a proportional loss in energy of character, in love of liberty, and in the instinct of honour. I do not think that I ignore either the rights or necessities of my time. I accept without reserve and regret the social condition which is the product of the French Revolution, and which, under the name of democracy, reigns and will reign more and more in the modern world. I hail with joy that inestimable advantage of equality before the law, which is a thousand times

more precious to the vanquished than to the victors, provided hypocrisy does not confiscate it to the profit of the strongest. When political freedom, under the sole form which it can wear in our country, reigned among us, and seemed likely to spread through all Europe, I loyally served and practised it, and, thanks to Heaven! never feared its reign for the truth. If that freedom should ever reappear, far from feeling alarm, I should bless its return.

The powers of the day teach us that it is incompatible with democracy, which is the inevitable law of the New World, and that this can only live and prosper along with equality and authority. Let us hope that they deceive themselves. And even if they are right, let us entreat democracy not to benumb and enervate democratic nations, not to render them incapable of self-government, self-defence, and self-respect. Let us hope that, after having bowed down every head, she may know better than to enslave every heart.

But while I hear the accents of that frightful adulation of fallen humanity, which is the distinctive characteristic of too many modern writers—whilst I see them lying prostrate before that idol which personifies their own vanity as well as that of their readers, and exhausting all the resources of a frivolous enthusiasm to intoxicate contemporary generations with impure incense—I remain sadly impressed by the spectacle of the debasement, feebleness, and growing impotence of each individual man in modern society. Does not this stupid and servile apotheosis of the wisdom and power of the masses menace us with the extinction at once of every personal initiative and all strong originality, and with the annihilation, at the same time, of all the proud susceptibilities of the soul, and the genius of public life? Shall we not be condemned to see every distinction, hierarchy, nobility, and independence, swallowed up in that invading and corrupt servitude which is exercised in the name of the omnipotence of numbers, *and which debases men so far as to make itself*

beloved by them?[1] Do we not risk the disappearance, beyond return, of individual dignity and liberty, under the absolute sovereignty of the State, of that despot who never dies, and who already extends everywhere his irresistible and pitiless level over prostrate human dust?

And even beyond the sphere of politics, who can throw an attentive and affectionate glance upon the actual world without being struck by its intellectual and moral impoverishment, even amidst the imposing grandeur of its material conquests and comforts? Who does not recoil before that flat monotony, that vast *ennui*, which threatens to become the distinctive characteristic of future civilisation? Who does not feel that the moral jurisdiction of souls lowers itself every day under the empire of material interests? Who does not tremble at that universal and progressive empire of mediocrity in theory as in practice, in men as in things? Who does not dimly foresee an era of general baseness and weakness, so much the more incurable that these sad infirmities are the natural and logical product of principles and institutions in which blind philosophers have pretended to concentrate the laws of progress, where quality is always stifled by quantity, and right sacrificed to force?

Weakness and baseness! these are precisely the things which were most completely unknown to the middle ages. They had their vices and crimes, numerous and atrocious; but in them strong and proud hearts never failed. In public life as in private, in the world as in the cloister, strong and magnanimous souls everywhere break forth—illustrious character and great individuals abounded.

And therein lies the true, the undeniable superiority of the middle ages. It was an epoch fertile in men—

"Magna parens virûm."

What and where has been always the great obstacle to the triumph of virtue and truth upon earth? Surely not in

[1] Vauvenargues.

the laws, the dogmas, and sacrifices, which impose or imply the possession of truth. We find it rather in those men whose duty it is to proclaim truth, to represent virtue, and to defend justice, and who, too often unequal to their task and unfaithful to their mission, turn back towards error or evil the generations whose guides and responsible teachers they were. Faith and laws have never been wanting to man: it is man himself who betrays his doctrine, his belief, and his duties. Give the world for its masters and models, men, pure, devout, energetic, humble in faith and obedient to duty, but intrepid and incapable of softness and baseness—real men; and the world will be always, if not saved by them, at least attentive to their voice, inspired by their lessons, and often led on or kept in order by their example. They will almost always triumph over evil; they will invariably make themselves respected by all and followed by many.

The middle ages produced a multitude of men of this temper; they produced many of a different kind; profligates and wretches were numerous then as everywhere, and in all times; but their number was balanced and even surpassed by that of saints and good men, men of heart and honour. They appear, one by one, to our astonished eyes, like the summits of the mountains after the Deluge, and they rise higher day by day in proportion as the waves of falsehood and ignorance abate and retire. Let us study these men; let us sound their hearts and reins; let us dissect their deeds and their writings—they have nothing to fear from that analysis, even when made by the most hostile hands. We shall there see whether, as incorrigible ignorance maintains, Catholicism weakens man, whether faith and humility lessen intelligence and courage, and whether there has ever been more energy or grandeur than in those souls which a vulgar prejudice represents to us as the creatures of fanaticism and superstition.

"It appears," said one of the greatest and most honest writers of our age, "in reading the histories of the aristo-

cratic ages, that to become master of his own fate and to rule his fellows, a man has only to overcome himself. But in running over the histories of our own times, one would say that man can do nothing, neither for himself nor those around him."[1]

From whence comes this miserable decline? Since man has lost the rein which directed and controlled him, since imprudent and impious hands have proscribed that discipline of Catholicism which human liberty has such imperative need of, the souls of men have subsided upon themselves; in place of Christian liberty they have encountered servitude, and in the midst of revolt have permitted themselves to fall into impotence.

M. de Tocqueville has said truly, To subdue self is the secret of strength. First to subdue and then to devote one's self, was the foundation of the monastic institution; but it was also in civil and public life the foundation of the noble characters as well as the solid institutions and robust liberties of our Catholic ancestors.

When we have long contemplated and studied them thoroughly, we fall back with sad astonishment upon the tame and feeble temperaments, the failing hearts, the weakened character and enervated will of which modern society is formed, and which would make us despair of the future, had not God made hope a virtue and a duty.

For it is not evil, nor its undeniable progress, more or less, which should disquiet us. We tremble rather before the weakness of virtue. I do not know that vice has not been more flagrant, intense, and universal in other times than the present; but I do know, unless history is a vast falsehood from beginning to end, that virtue has never been so enervated and so timid. I speak especially of public life. I admit and admire the treasures of faith and charity which the actual world encloses in its bosom. But are the virtues of private life enough for nations emancipated by

[1] TOCQUEVILLE, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, iii. 173.

the blood of Christ? and besides, is it not always, sooner or later, infected and injured by social degeneration? At the present time, and in public life, and the social sphere, virtue seems only to exist in men's consciences long enough to be sacrificed at the first appearance of danger, or touch of fatigue. If a struggle is inevitable, we may endure it for the space of a morning, but only on condition either of being crowned with victory before nightfall, or capitulating next day.

Success only is esteemed, the vile success of an hour, of a moment. This inspires the most worthy souls with involuntary respect. Resistance, long and thorough, appears to them insane and impossible. We no longer know either the secrets of courage, the holy joys of sacrifice, or the magic of danger nobly encountered in a noble cause. Thus the reign of the infidel is less assured than that of the coward. Alas! it is our own weakness which is our worst enemy; it is this which makes the good man not only the involuntary slave, but the docile servant, instrument, and accomplice of the wicked. Of all the arts, that one which has been brought to the greatest perfection among us, is the art of laying down our arms and stooping our neck under the yoke. We live in the age of concessions, of failures, of base complaisance for everything that has the appearance of strength. Fear is our queen. We long, like Esther before Ahasuerus, to kiss the end of her sceptre.

This being so, we might at least, in the midst of our modern enjoyments and security, render justice to the great men of the ages of faith. In the tranquil enjoyment of those good things still guaranteed by the Catholic faith, of the domestic virtues, conjugal fidelity, and the security of the fireside, all which we owe to the stubborn courage of the generations which have preceded us, we might learn to bless and honour these chosen soldiers, who died on the ramparts which protect us still, who fought to secure to us

those truths and virtues which constitute the common patrimony of Christian nations.

As for us, we ask for these men and their times not favour, but justice. Our ambition is to restore their aureole to those old and forgotten saints who were once the heroes of our annals, the divine ancestors of all Christian nations, the patriarchs of all faithful races, the immortal models of spiritual life, the witnesses and the martyrs of truth. Our duty is to recognise in their life not the ideal of Christian humanity, but an ideal which all men in all times can approach, and which has never ceased to be realised, in different degrees, in the bosom of Catholic unity.

Through the clouds which shroud their memory, they offer to us the grandest and most encouraging of spectacles —that of an army victorious in the service of a good cause. The time in which they lived and fought had, like all other times, its disorders, excesses, abuses, and ruins. But the cause was not the less good, nor the army less heroic.

Yes, it may be well asserted, the middle ages are, and shall remain, the heroic age of Christendom. But be not afraid; we cannot return to it. You, its blind panegyrists, will attempt it in vain; and you, its detractors, equally blind, are foolishly alarmed by a chimerical danger. Man can neither be kept in his cradle nor sent back there. Youth does not return. We can neither resuscitate its charm nor its storms. We are the sons of the middle ages, we cannot continue them. Emancipated from the past, we are responsible only for the present and the future. But, thank God! we need not blush for our cradle.

The question is not then, in any respect, to reconstruct that which has disappeared for ever, or to save that which God has permitted to perish; the question is solely to claim the rights of justice and truth, and to reassert that good fame of Catholic men and times which is our inalienable inheritance. Such ought to be the sole aim of this renewal of Catholic history, which some men follow through a

thousand obstacles and disappointments, oftener excited than arrested by the renewed attacks of the enemy, and still more frequently troubled and afflicted in the sincerity of their efforts by the follies and miseries which they incur the risk of appearing responsible for. But they know that often, after long darkness, the truth finds secret issues, unforeseen outlets, marvellous blossomings, which no human power can arrest. They trust in the tardy but inevitable justice of posterity.

If the end of historical studies is, as Montaigne says, "to converse with the great minds of the best ages,"[1] this could be nowhere better attained than in surveying this epoch which has been so long sacrificed. The most eloquent priest of our times has not calumniated history, in saying of her that she was "the rich treasury of man's dishonour."[2] She demonstrates most frequently only the triumphs of injustice, and, what is worse, the base connivance of posterity with these triumphs, and its perverse adulation of successful crime. But notwithstanding, a noble and consolatory mission remains to the historian; to protest against the perverse instincts of the crowd; to raise just but lost causes to the appreciation of the heart; to vindicate legitimate resistance, modest and tried virtue, perseverance unfruitful, but steadfast in well-doing; to throw light upon forgotten corners, where languishes the betrayed memory of good men overcome; to batter down, or at least to breach usurped glories, and wicked or corrupt popularity; but, above all, to bring to light and honour man himself, his individual soul, his efforts, his strength, his virtue, and his worth, and to protest thus against the odious oppression of those pretended general laws, which serve as apologies for so much crime and cowardice. Is it possible to imagine a nobler or purer task for any man who is not bound to the worship of strength and success? And where could he fulfil it better than in

[1] MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, i. 25.

[2] Le P. LACORDAIRE, *Panégyrique du B. Fourier.*

the inexhaustible mine and vast unexplored regions of the Catholic ages?

And moreover, beyond all systematic and polemical research, the study of history, especially in those depths which are at once so obscure and so closely connected with our origin, exercises upon every delicate mind an influence deeply attractive, and full of melancholy sweetness. It attracts, enlightens, and awakes, like the echo of the songs of our youth. If it happens to an old man to listen, in the decline of his years, to a melody which has charmed his childhood, it transports him, not without profit to his soul, into the midst of the dreams and hopes of former years. It restores to him neither his strength nor his youthful vigour, but it makes him breathe again the breath of his spring-time. He lives anew; he is reanimated and retempered in his primitive ardour; and if happily inspired, he recalls all that he has learned, suffered, and accomplished; he perceives his own modest and laborious place in the long succession of his race; he binds together the chain of time; he understands his life, and he is resigned. Before that past, which opens to him the perspective of the future, he bows his head with love and respect, without at any time confounding what was only its young and fragile beauty with its essential virtue and undying soul.

CHAPTER X

OF THE FORTUNE OF THIS BOOK

Vagliami 'l lungo studio e il grand' amore.

BUT now is the time when the enjoyments which this long labour has brought me draw near their end. "When a book appears," says a woman of genius, "what happy moments has it not given to one who writes according to his heart, and as an act of worship! What sweet tears have fallen in his solitude upon the marvels it narrates!"[1] She was right; and without aspiring to the rank which she has attained—without venturing, like her, into the domain of imagination—it is possible to find inexhaustible attractions in a graver and less brilliant sphere. Those long and indefatigable researches through the labours of others, in search of a date, of a fact, of a name, of a striking or speaking detail; those discoveries which every author flatters himself that he has been first to make or restore to light; that truth which he perceives, which he seizes, which escapes him, which returns, which at last he lays hold of, and sets forth luminous and victorious for ever; those interviews, intimate and prolonged, with so many great and holy souls who come out of the shadows of the past to reveal themselves by their acts or their writings; all the pure and profound enjoyments of a conscientious historian—behold them finished!

"Things won are done: joy's soul lies in the doing."

They must give place to the trials, to the disappointments, to the dangers of publicity—to the numerous chances

[1] MADAME DE STAEL, *De l'Allemagne.*

of malevolence, indifference, and forgetfulness. Now rises a melancholy anticipation of the dangers which we are about to brave, of the troubles which we have spontaneously drawn upon ourselves. Now appears in all its bitterness the difficult and thankless task of the writer who loves his own soul and that of his neighbour: now, but too late, we discover all the good reasons we had to be discouraged, to renounce the task and hold our peace.

Among so many dangers there is one which the most indulgent critic cannot fail to point out, and which I am conscious not to have avoided—that of monotony. Always the same incidents and the same motives! always penitence, retirement, the struggle of evil against good, of the spirit against the flesh, of solitude against the world—always foundations, donations, vocations—always self-devotion, sacrifice, generosity, courage, patience! The result of this wearies the pen of the writer, and, still more, the attention of the reader. Let us, however, remark, that the virtues so frequently evoked in the following narratives are still sufficiently rare in the world, and appear but too seldom before the ordinary tribunal of history. Here we shall see them almost on every page. They are, it is true, accompanied by the inevitable train of human inconsistency, feebleness, and wretchedness; but these we encounter, perhaps, less here than in any other narrative. I venture even to affirm that we shall see less here than elsewhere of those triumphs of violence and deceit, of injustice and falsehood—thanks to which, the annals of humanity are so repulsive, and the lessons of history so immoral. I may perhaps be led astray by a certain degree of self-estimation; but I am fain to hope that the reader who is sufficiently patient to follow me to the end, will come forth from this study with a soul at once tranquillised by the sweet influences of the purest virtue, and stimulated both by the love of all that renews and exalts human nature, and by aversion for everything which taints and debases it.

However, I must repeat again, I have never extenuated the evil nor magnified the good which I might find upon my road: I have sought to represent the monastic orders, and the society in which they occupied so important a place, by reproducing faithfully the features and the colours furnished by contemporary authors.

And I may be permitted to say that it is impossible to have been more rigidly scrupulous in all that concerns the correctness of these researches. Every word which I have written has been drawn from original and contemporary sources, and if I have quoted facts or expressions from second-hand authors, it has never been without attentively verifying the original or completing the text. A single date, quotation, or note, apparently insignificant, has often cost me hours and sometimes days of labour. I have never contented myself with being approximatively right, nor resigned myself to doubt until every chance of arriving at certainty was exhausted. It is a thankless and painful task, but one which ends by having a certain attraction, and becoming a habit, of which it is impossible to divest one's self. "Truth," says a celebrated historian of our day —one who can boast with truth that *his age has read him* —"Truth is the object, the duty, and even the happiness of a true historian: when we know how noble she is, and even how convenient—for she alone explains everything—when we know her, we seek her, we desire her, we love her, we set forth her image only, or at least something which we take for her." [1]

I have thought it a duty, at the risk of enlarging these volumes, and even of making them less accessible to the general reader, to add as notes the original text of the most important passages of the authors quoted, and especially of the correspondences embodied in my text. I have acted thus, certainly not out of ostentation, or to give myself credit for an easy erudition, but by a natural taste for exactitude

[1] M. THIERS, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, vol. xvi. p. 418.

and for the uttermost sincerity. The voluminous works from which I have personally extracted all these passages, and which have hitherto been difficult of access, have recently become much less rare and costly.[1] I desired at the same time to give examples of the Latin of the middle ages—that idiom, retempered and transfigured, so to speak, by Christianity, which retains, beside the inimitable beauty of the classic models, a grace of its own. But above all, I lacked courage to reduce the magnificent language of our Catholic ancestors to the mean proportions of my own feebleness. I have almost always found my translation, however literal it was, so imperfect and unfaithful, that I give it only as a sort of indication, to put my readers upon the road, of the beauty and truth of the originals. I love to believe that those among them who appreciate historical sincerity will remember with kindness, in the future, this increase of labour and sacrifice of self-love.

The task of the historian, thus understood, resembles that of the engraver, who lavishes his labour, his time, and his eyesight, and sometimes consecrates ten or twenty years of his life, to reproduce with a religious scrupulousness the smallest details of the canvas of the great painter whom his admiration has chosen. His pious labour is devoted to spread far and wide faithful copies of a model which he despairs to equal, and thus to convert the treasure, known only to a few, into the patrimony of the many. His task is often interrupted, but perpetually returned to, until his persevering graver has accomplished the cherished work. Thus have I laboured, a modest and diligent workman, for a glory which is not mine. I have attempted to raise a monument, not certainly to my own renown, but to that of

[1] Thanks to the *Patrologie* published by M. l'Abbé Migne, who has reproduced, in an easy and economical form, not only the greater part of the ancient collections, but a multitude of documents and authors almost entirely out of reach. Unhappily for me, most of my researches were made before the publications of M. Migne ; hence the many references to editions which are now, so to speak, out of circulation.

virtue, truth, and sanctity, of which I am only a distant and unworthy admirer. I have hoped, not to create a great work of my own, but simply to reproduce and multiply the image of the great deeds of our fathers, and to promote the admiration and study of their honour.

Public events, in which duty and honour had assigned me a part, have long and often interrupted this work. When I have taken it up again, and recalled the time in which it was begun, I am obliged to acknowledge that many changes have taken place around, which still more diminish the chances of success, and dissipate all the vanity of authorship.

This work, which, published sooner, might perhaps, like the *Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth*, twenty-five years ago, have opened a new path across the vast field of Catholic history, can only pretend now to take its place among a series of contemporary studies. The subject, then completely ignored or forgotten, has been since approached by many. Although no extensive view of the entire field of monastic history has been attempted, the ground has been broken by monographs sufficiently numerous and detailed, to have already in some degree fatigued the public attention, and to deter the reader from that which he can already look upon as a beaten road, and a landscape already too well known. For the same reason, many results attained by laborious researches are no longer held to be discoveries, and scarcely arrest the gaze of the curious.

Besides—and this is still sadder and more important—the spirit of many amongst Catholics has changed. The religious public has fallen a prey to the domination of a school whose very existence would have seemed a dream when this work was begun, but whose empire is sufficiently established to enable them now to pronounce a kind of ostracism against all who will not bow beneath their yoke in the religious sphere.

It is unnecessary to say that a book which proclaims the

divinity of the Gospel, and the infallible authority of the Church, is not likely to be received as work of any worth by the popular arbiters of taste and distributors of contemporary fame. Discarded amongst those whom they call the slaves of orthodoxy, the author, in the eyes of the most indulgent of these authorities, can only be entitled to silent pity.

But, moreover, it must be known and acknowledged that a book which recognises the rights of reason, and searches with ardour through the past for the effaced vestiges of liberty and honour, to make them cherished and regretted by modern generations, must renounce all hope of success with too great a number of those who call themselves orthodox.

Twenty years ago all studies favourable to the re-establishment of Catholic truth, especially in history, were received with indulgent sympathy by the faithful and the clergy. In their ranks, in their hearts, we found an assured asylum against the disdains and derisions of our natural adversaries, and against the absence of that great public favour, which for a long time has belonged exclusively to productions hostile or indifferent to religion. Now it is no longer thus; the merits of the defenders of the Catholic cause are too often judged according to those oracles who inflict wilfully, on all who reject their authority, the reproach of liberalism, rationalism, and, above all, of naturalism.

I have achieved a right to this threefold reproach. I should be surprised, and even mortified, not to be thought worthy of it, for I adore liberty, which alone, in my judgment, secures to truth triumphs worthy of her. I hold reason to be the grateful ally of faith, not her enslaved and humiliated victim. And, lastly, although animated by a lively and simple faith in the supernatural, I have recourse to it only when the Church ordains, or when all natural explanation fails to interpret undeniable facts.

This will be enough to call down upon me the anathema of our modern inquisitors, whose thunders we must know how to brave, unless, as said Mabillon in an encounter with certain monastic denunciators of his time, "unless we choose to renounce sincerity, good faith, and honour."[1]

Thus, then, disdained by one party as bearing the stamp of superstition and credulity, this book will still be marked out by the other as "written in a spirit of complacency towards the present times." For this is the language used against such as me.[2] It will stand ignored, and still more certainly unknown, between two kinds of enmities. I am grieved at the thought, but not afraid. I consent willingly to be treated as a suspected person on the one hand, and as a fanatic on the other. It is the fate of him who belongs to no party, and no party has a claim upon me. I owe nothing to any man. I no longer aspire to anything, unless to the ineffable joy of confessing the good cause, and braving the wretched triumphs of falsehood and baseness. The yoke of truth I bear with pride, and have never known any other.

[1] He says further:—"I know that it is the fate of all who give anything to the public, and especially of those who treat of history, to expose themselves to the censure of men, and to draw upon themselves the anger of many. . . . Indeed, whatever part we take, or however carefully we may regulate our design, it is impossible to content all the world. If we receive everything without discussion, we are ridiculed by judicious persons; and if we examine everything with exactness and discernment, we are called rash and presumptuous by others; *Si quid simpliciter edamus, insani; si quid exacte, vocamur præsumptuosi.* Of these two methods I have chosen the second, as being most conformed to that love of truth which a Christian, a monk, and a priest ought to possess, as well as most advantageous to the honour of the order; and, in short, as being absolutely necessary in an enlightened age like ours, which permits us neither to write fables, nor to advance anything of which there is not sufficient proof."—*Réponse au Père Bastide;* quoted by M. DANTIER in his *Rapports sur la Correspondance Inédite des Bénédictins de St. Maur.* 1857.

[2] This alludes to the twenty-four articles of theological criticism published in the *Univers* by Dom Gueranger, Abbot of Solesmes, against Prince Albert de Broglie's book, *The Church and the Empire in the Fourth Century.*—TRANSLATOR.

But I would not only confess, I would fain also serve this truth; and it is in this respect that I fear to have betrayed it.

In terminating this first foundation of an edifice which has consumed many years of assiduous labour, I feel myself confounded and humiliated by the worthlessness of my work compared to the labour which it has cost me, and, above all, to the ideal which I had formed. The consciousness of a double weakness seizes and overpowers me. I feel myself beneath my task, both in soul and talent. Of these two inferiorities, the first is doubtless the most poignant and painful. Others much less unworthy than myself have confessed it with trembling, in proportion as they entered into the annals of the monks and saints. The illustrious Mabillon, in completing one of his incomparable volumes, said, in terms which I must quote for my own confusion, "May it please God not to impute it to me as a crime that I have passed so many years studying the acts of the saints, and yet resemble them so little!"[1] The great apostle had already expressed that humble distrust of himself in the memorable text: "Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."[2] And the psalmist seems to address to us specially that formidable warning: "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?"[3] "Whosoever," says St. John Chrysostom, "admires with love the merits of the saints, and exalts the glory of the just, ought to imitate their uprightness and sanctity. . . . We ought to imitate them if we praise them, or cease to praise them if we scorn to imitate."[4]

[1] "Utinam et mihi non in culpam vertat, quod per tot annos in actis sanctorum occupatus, tam longe absim ab eorum exemplis."—*Præf. in V. sæc. Bened.*, n. 138.

[2] 1 Cor. ix. 27. [3] Psalm l. 16.

[4] ST. JOHN CHRYSOST., *Serm. de Martyribus, quod aut imitandi sunt, aut non laudandi.*

To quote these formidable words, which bear witness against me, is enough, or more than enough, to show that a deep sense of my insufficiency is not wanting. Happily there are authorities whose indulgence is more encouraging. "It is," says St. Jerome, "a kind of candid and ingenuous confession to praise in others that which is awanting in one's self."[1] And do I need to protest besides that I have never pretended to write a work of edification, nor believed myself authorised to give to others lessons of penitence or sacrifice, of which I had but too much need for myself? So arrogant a thought has never glanced upon my soul: a just conviction of my own inferiority was enough to recall to me that such was neither my right nor my mission.

A simple child of the Church, I do not pretend to be either her organ or her minister; and much more justly than Mabillon I ought to reproach myself in relating these marvels of Christian virtue, that I know so well how to admire them, and so little how to imitate.

But on a lower level than these heights, and without any other title than that of a sinner who has not denied his faith, without any other pretension than that of rendering a distant and humble homage to truth, may not we be permitted, even with an infirm hand, and colours tarnished by the breath of the world, to trace the image of that which we venerate and love? The painter who attempts to reproduce the ideal of beauty does not pretend to resemble his model; and no one reproaches him with that impotence. The Church accepts graciously, and even permits to be offered in her name to the faithful, images often coarse and rustic, without demanding too much of the artist, and on the sole condition that his design does not injure the majesty of the symbol. She allows him to share thus in the blessing which descends upon all acts of goodwill. She also allows the obscure Christian, who walks in the splendid processions

[1] "Ingenua et verecunda confessio est quo ipse careas id in aliis prædicare."—*Letters*, vol. ii. p. 108, edition Collombet.

of her worship, lost among the crowd, and is neither pontiff nor priest, nor even a modest acolyte charged with the censer or candlestick, to join his sincere voice to the concerts of the sacred ministers, and to sing without pride, but without fear, the praises of the Most High.

Should I speak, finally, of my literary insufficiency to this colossal task which I have had the temerity to undertake? No one can be more convinced of it than I am. After the history of the Church herself, there is no vaster or more noble subject than the history of the monastic orders. I feel a melancholy certainty that I have not done it justice. Let others arise, then, to replace and efface me; let their better-inspired labours restore to chaos this incomplete essay.

I will not venture to say with the prophet: "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!"[1] Alas! I am too sensible that I have not received that sublime gift of genius, that pen that graves, not on the rock, but even on the hardest hearts, the ineffaceable stamp of truth. My only merit will be that of compiling, of translating, and of transcribing events which so many saints and heroes have inspired and accomplished.

There is, however, a thought which ought to warm the courage and restore the strength of the humblest soldier of the faith: it is the recollection of the immense evil done to humanity, not only by the genius of the great enemies of God, but by that cloud of obscure scribes, of vulgar and servile copyists, who have distilled in detail the venom of their masters, and have diffused it through all the lesser veins of the social body. In sight of the daily-increasing mischief they make, one can understand how it might be a legitimate ambition and honourable duty to become the scribe of justice and the copyist of truth.

Even in these modest limits, how often have I felt that I

[1] Job xix. 23, 24.

had undertaken a work above my strength! How often have I been tempted to renounce this excessive task, and to fly from that abyss which seemed ready to swallow up the passing and shortened years of life, an exhausted patience, and worn-out strength!

But how often also, in the silence of night, under the roof of the old manor-house in which most of these pages have been written, behind the heavy folios in which their acts have been registered by their laborious successors, have I imagined myself to see, appearing around me, that imposing train of saints, pontiffs, doctors, missionaries, artists, masters of word and deed, who have issued, from age to age, out of the crowded ranks of the monastic orders! I contemplated with trembling these august resuscitated forms of the glorious and unappreciated Past. Their austere yet benevolent looks seemed to stray over their profaned tombs, their forgotten works, the despised monuments of their unwearied industry, the defaced sites of their holy dwellings, and then to rest upon me, their unworthy analyst, confused and overwhelmed by the weight of my unworthiness. I heard a voice, noble and plaintive, come forth from their chaste and masculine breasts: "So many incessant labours, so many evils endured, so many services rendered, so many lives consumed for the glory of God, and for the good of men! and behold the return—calumny, ingratitude, proscription, contempt! In these modern generations, which are at once overwhelmed by our benefits and oblivious of them, will no man rise up to avenge our memory?

'Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor!'

No apology, no panegyric; a simple and exact tale—the truth, and nothing but the truth—justice, nothing but justice,—let that be our sole revenge!"

And then I felt a thrill of ardent and melancholy emotion run through my veins. "I am but a creature of dust," I

answer them, " but that dust may perhaps be animated by contact with your sacred bones. Perhaps a spark of your fire may come to light up my soul. I have only a cold and sad pen for my weapon, and I am the first of my blood who has fought with the pen alone. But, notwithstanding, if it serves with honour, it may in its turn become a sword, in the bold and holy warfare of conscience and the disarmed majesty of right, against the triumphant oppression of falsehood and sin."

LA ROCHE-EN-BRENY,
January 1860.

BOOK I

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AFTER THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH

SUMMARY

The Roman Empire, converted to Christianity, offers a more sad and surprising spectacle than under the Pagan Cæsars.—The alliance of the priesthood and the Empire hinders neither the ruin of the State nor the servitude of the Church.—The Fathers of the Church unanimously acknowledge the precocious decay of the Christian world.—Action of the imperial power on the Church.—Personal intervention of the Emperors in theology; every heresiarch finds an auxiliary upon the throne; persecutions and oppressions more cruel than before Constantine.—The divinity of the prince still proclaimed under Theodosius.—Civil society, Christian by name, remains subject at heart to Paganism in its most degenerate form.—Uncurbed despotism of the Emperors; tortures of taxation.—Universal destruction in the East; universal confusion in the West.—Military degradation; moral abjectness; derisive equality of the *Roman Citizens;* social impotence of the Roman laws.—Virtue and freedom are only found in the Church, who would not resign herself to the impotence of civil society, but did not succeed in transforming the old imperial world. In order to preserve the whole of Christendom from the fate of the Lower Empire, two invasions were necessary, that of the Barbarians and that of the Monks.

BOOK I

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AFTER THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH

Ea nobis erepta sunt quæ hominibus non minus quam liberi cara sunt, libertas, honestas, dignitas.—CICERO, *Epist. ad Fam.*, iv. 5.

Our belly cleaveth unto the earth: arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercy's sake.—*Psalm* xliv. 25, 26.

THE Roman people, victorious over all nations, and masters of the world, yet enslaved during three centuries by a series of monsters or madmen, scarcely interrupted by some endurable princes, exhibits in history the greatest wonder of the debasement and downfall of man. The peace of the Church, proclaimed by Constantine in 312, was, on the other hand, a prodigy of the power and goodness of God. The Empire, vanquished by an unarmed crowd, laid down its arms before the Galilean; persecution, after a crowning paroxysm, the most cruel of all, gave place to protection; humanity breathed again; and truth, sealed by the blood of so many thousand martyrs, after having been sealed by the blood of God made man, could henceforth take freely her victorious flight to the ends of the earth.

However, there is a wonder still greater: it is the rapid and permanent decay of the Roman world after the peace of the Church. Yes, if there is nothing more abject in the annals of cruelty and corruption than the Roman empire from Augustus to Diocletian, there is something more surprising and sadder still—the Roman empire after it became Christian.

How came it that Christianity, drawn from the catacombs to be placed on the throne of the Cæsars, was not able to regenerate souls, in temporal matters as well as in spiritual, to restore to authority its prestige, to the citizen his dignity, to Rome her grandeur, and to civilised Europe the strength to live and defend herself? Why did the imperial power, when reconciled to the Church, fall more and more into contempt and impotence? How is it that the memorable alliance of the priesthood with the Empire, hindered neither the ruin of the State nor the servitude and mutilation of the Church?

Never had there been a revolution more complete; for it was not only her own emancipation which the Church celebrated in seeing Constantine adopt the cross for his standard, it was an intimate and complete alliance between the cross and the imperial sceptre. The Christian religion had scarcely ceased to be proscribed, when already she was patronised, and then dominant. The successor of Nero and Decius seated himself at the first general council, and received the title of Defender of the Sacred Canons. The Roman republic and the Christian republic joined their hands, so to speak, in that of Constantine. Sole head, sole judge, sole legislator of the universe, he consented to take bishops for his counsellors, and to give the force of law to their decrees. The world had one monarch; the monarch was absolute: no man dreamed of disputing or limiting a power which the Church blessed, and which glorified itself by protecting her.

This ideal, so dear to many minds, of a man before whom all men prostrated themselves, and who, master of all these slaves, bowed down in his turn before God, was thus seen and realised. Such a state of things lasted for two or three centuries, during which time everything fell to pieces in the empire: and the Church has never known a period in which she was more tormented, more agitated, or more compromised.

While imperial Rome sank into degradation,[1] the Church had led the greatest and most noble life, not only, as we picture to ourselves too much, in the depths of the catacombs, but striving heroically and in full day, by suffering and arguments, by eloquence and by courage, by her councils[2] and schools, by her martyrs first and above all, but also by her great apologists, such as St. Irenæus, St. Justin, St. Cyprian, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius, who at once renewed and purified Greek and Latin eloquence. War had succeeded so well with her, that when she was offered peace, she already filled all the earth.[3]

But after having held out so gloriously through a battle of three centuries, what means could she take for resisting the influence of victory? How maintain her triumph at the height of her combats? How escape succumbing, as all victors here below succumb, to pride and the intoxication of success? For the vigilant and fertile education of warfare, for the holy joys of persecution, for the dignity of permanent and avowed danger, an entirely new condition was substituted, and upon ground full of another description of difficulties. Associated henceforth with the same imperial power which had in vain essayed to destroy her, she became in some degree responsible for a society enervated by three centuries of servitude, and gangrened by all the refinements

[1] "The Egyptian, prostrated before the beasts of the Nile, outrages humanity less than the age of the Antonines, with its philosophers and its jurisconsults rendering divine honours to the Emperor Commodus."—OZANAM, *La Civilisation Chrétienne au Cinquième Siècle*, t. i. p. 113. We shall be pardoned for quoting incessantly the admirable works of this young writer who was at once so perfect a Christian, so excellent a writer, so eloquent and sympathetic an orator, and whose premature death is one of the greatest misfortunes that religion and literature have had to deplore in our days.

[2] The collection of P. Labbe counts sixty-two of these previous to the peace of the Church.

[3] "At this time, the Church, still newly born, filled all the earth."—BOSSUET, *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle.*

of corruption. It was not enough for her to govern the ancient world,—she had still to transform and replace it.

It was a formidable task, but not above her power. God chose that very moment to send to His Church a cloud of saints, of pontiffs, of doctors, of orators, and of writers. They formed that constellation of Christian genius which, under the name of Fathers of the Church, have attained the highest place in the veneration of all ages, and forced respect even from the most sceptical. They lighted up the East and the West with the radiance of all that was true and beautiful. They lavished in the service of truth an ardour, an eloquence, and a knowledge, which nothing has ever surpassed. A hundred years after the peace of the Church, they had covered the world with good works and admirable writings, created a refuge for every grief, a guardianship for every weakness, a patrimony for every distress, lessons and examples for every truth and every virtue.

And still they did not succeed in forming a new society, in transforming the pagan world. By their own confession, they fell short of their task.

That long cry of grief which echoes through all the pages which Christian saints and writers have left to us, strikes us at once with an intensity which has never been surpassed in the succession of time. They felt themselves attacked and swallowed up by pagan corruption. Listen to Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, Salvien especially—listen to them all! They denounced the precocious decay and disgraceful downfall of the Christian people, who had become a prey to vice.[1] They saw with despair the majority of the faithful precipitate themselves into the voluptuousness of paganism. The frightful taste for bloody or obscene spectacles, for the games of the circus, the combats of the gladiators, all the

[1] "Quam dissimilis est nunc a se ipso populus Christianus, id est, ab eo quod fuit quondam! . . . Quid est aliud pæne omnis cœtus Christianorum quam sentina vitiorum?"—SALVIEN, *De Gubernatione Dei.*

shameful frivolities, all the prostitutions of persecuting Rome, came to assail the new converts, and to subjugate the sons of the martyrs. But a little, and a new Juvenal might have sung the defeat of those who had reconquered the world for God, and the vengeance executed by the genius of evil upon its victors:—

"Victumque ulciscitur orbem."

However great a margin we may leave for exaggeration in these unanimous complaints, they prove not less certainly that the political victory of Christianity, far from having assured the definite triumph of Christian principles in the world, had provoked a revival of all the vices which the Christian faith ought to have annihilated.

But paganism retained and renewed its empire much more than in merely private and domestic life, by the nature and action of the temporal power in the midst of the Church. No symptom of that transformation to which the idea and exercise of power should one day yield amongst Christian nations, appeared here. Constantine and his successors were baptized: but not the empire nor the imperial power. The hand which opened to Christians the gate of power and favour, was the same which had laid ambushes for them, in which any other than the immortal spouse of Christ must have perished without hope or honour. The emperors aspired to become the masters and oracles of that religion of which they ought only to have been the children, or at most the ministers. Scarcely had they recognised her right to exist, when they believed themselves invested with the right of governing her. The baptized of the evening expected to be the pontiffs and doctors of the following day. Not being able to succeed in that, they began to persecute her on account of Arius, as their predecessors had done on account of Jupiter and Venus.

Constantine himself, the liberator of the Church, the lay president of the Council of Nicæa, was soon tired of the

liberty and increasing authority of the new freemen. Won by the ecclesiastical courtiers, who already surrounded his throne, he exiled St. Athanasius, the most noble and pure of Christians. It was even worse under his successors. Let us hear Bossuet on this subject: "The Emperor Constantius put himself at the head of the Arians, and cruelly persecuted the Catholics. . . . This persecution was regarded *as more cruel* than that of Decius and Maximinus, and, in a word, as a prelude to that of Antichrist. . . . Valens, emperor of the East, an Arian like Constantius, was a still more violent persecutor, and it is he of whom it was said that he seemed to soften when he changed the penalty of death into that of banishment!"[1]

But more dangerous even than persecution was the invasion of politics into the Church. When, after forty years of disputes, Constantius imposed on the East and West the equivocal formulary of the Council of Rimini, the world, according to the celebrated expression of St. Jerome, groaned and was astonished to find itself Arian,[2] thanks to the servile conduct of an Episcopacy which permitted itself to be led and frightened by the eunuchs of the imperial palace.

The trial must have been cruel, for then occurred what never happened before, and has rarely been seen since—a pope gave way to its pressure. Liberius, according to the common opinion, yielded, after a noble resistance, to the torments of exile: he sacrificed, not the truth itself, but the intrepid defender of the truth, Athanasius. He recovered himself, and pledged the infallible authority of his See to no error; he only compromised the fame of his persecutors.[3]

[1] BOSSUET, *Cinquième Avertissement aux Protestants*, c. 18.

[2] "Ingemuit totus orbis et Arianum miratus est se esse."—*Dial. adv. Luc.*, c. 19.

[3] FLEURY, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, liv. xvi. c. 46. Compare COUNT DE MAISTRE (*Du Pape*, book i. c. 15), who recalls the noble expression of St. Athanasius, speaking of the pontifical weakness of which he had been a victim: "Violence proves the will of the man who causes trembling, but not that of the man who trembles."—*Hist. Arian. ad Monachos*, c. 41.

But at his name we see a shadow and cloud glide across that column of light which guides the observations of every Catholic when he plunges into the obscurities of history.

Violence, exiles, and massacres, recommenced in the fifth century, and were prolonged from generation to generation. Every heresiarch found an auxiliary on the imperial throne; after Arius, Nestorius; after Nestorius, Eutychus; and thus we proceed from persecution to persecution, until we reach the bloody oppression of the iconoclast emperors, after which nothing could follow but that crowning schism, which separated for ever the free and orthodox West from the East, which remained prostrate beneath the double yoke of error and force.

But what evils and bitterness existed during these long and dark centuries, and before that final rupture! They were no longer pagans, but Christians who persecuted Christianity. It was no longer from a prætorium or circus that the emperor, a personification of implacable ancient Rome, sent the Christians to the wild beasts; it was in the midst of Councils, and in the name of a fictitious orthodoxy, that he deliberated his sentences, marked with the triple stamp of chicanery, falsehood, and cruelty. Before coming the length of exile and execution, conscience and intelligence were tortured by their formulas and definitions.

The finest genius and most noble spirits of that age, which was so fruitful in great men, exhausted themselves in vain in reasoning with these crowned casuists, who dogmatised instead of reigning, and sacrificed in miserable quarrels the majesty of the Church and the security of the State. Exile itself must have been a solace to these holy confessors, obliged to argue respectfully with such antagonists. While the empire fell into decay, and the avenging nations entered on all sides by the breach, these pitiful autocrats, already masters of a clergy which vied in servility with the eunuchs of the imperial antechamber, wrote books of theology, arranged formulas, fabricated and condemned heresies in

confessions of faith which were themselves heretical.[1] And as if these crowned theologians were not enough, the empresses too must needs interfere in their turn to govern consciences, define dogmas, and persuade bishops. We see an Ambrose involved in contention with a Justina, and a Chrysostom the victim of the follies of an Eudoxia. Nothing was too insane or too contemptible for this wretched government.

The example of Theodosius may be quoted against us; but what a crimson light is thrown upon the condition of that pretended Christian empire by the celebrated penitence which did so much honour to the great Theodosius and to St. Ambrose! What a society must that have been in which the massacre of a whole town could be decreed in cold blood, to avenge the injury done to a statue! What a tale is that of the torments and sufferings inflicted upon the inhabitants of Antioch before the intervention of the bishop Flavian had appeased the imperial wrath! The horror of such a rule, had it lasted, must have stained for ever the Christianity it affected to adorn. And besides, for one Theodosius, how many were there like Valens, Honorius, and Copronymus! The frightful temptation of possessing omnipotence, turned all these poor heads. The Christian princes were no stronger to resist it than the pagans. To monsters of cruelty and luxury, such as Heliogabalus and Maximinus, succeeded prodigies of imbecility and inconsistency.

The bitterest element for the Church in all this, must have been the pretence of those melancholy masters of the world to serve and favour her. She had to pay very dear for the material support lavished upon her by the imperial power, which protected without honouring and even without

[1] Such were the *Henoticum* of the Emperor Zenon, in 482, condemned by Pope Felix III.; the *Ecthesis* of Heraclius, condemned by Pope John IV.; and the *Type* of Constantine II., condemned by the Pope St. Martin.

understanding her. Every decree made in favour of Christianity—to close the temples, to interdict the sacrifices of the ancient worship, to repress or root out the last remains of paganism—was accompanied or followed by some act intended to affect questions of dogma, of discipline, or of ecclesiastical government. A law of Theodosius II. sentenced heretics to penal servitude in the mines, and he was himself an Eutychian. Thus heresy, believing itself sufficiently orthodox to proscribe everything that differed from its views, ascended the throne where omnipotence awaited it! The same emperor, and his colleague Valentinian II., decreed the penalty of death for idolatry. But idolatry reigned in their own hearts and around them. The pagan tradition of the divinity of the prince pervaded the Court and all the acts of government.[1] The most pious among them, the great Theodosius himself, spoke unceasingly of their *sacred* palaces, of their *divine* house; they permitted their officials to adore their *eternity*. The same Valentinian, who punished idolaters with death, endeavouring one day to call the Romans to arms against an invasion of Vandals, declared his proclamation to be signed by the *divine hand*, speaking of his own.[2]

Thus the divinity of the prince, that invention of the Cæsars, which had put a seal to the degradation of Rome, and placed slavery under the sanction of idolatry—that hideous chimera which had been the principal pretext of persecution, and which had drunk the blood of so many human victims—still lasted a century after the peace of the Church. Sacrifices were no longer made to the Cæsars after their death, but during their life they were proclaimed divine and eternal! It was only a word, but a word which exhibited the corruption of souls and the unconcealed thraldom of Christian ideas.

The Church has passed through many trials; she has

[1] FRANZ DE CHAMPAGNY, *De la Charité Chrétienne au* IV^e *Siècle*, p. 358.
[2] "Et manu divina: Proponatur," &c.—*Novell.*, tit. XX.

often been persecuted, often compromised, betrayed, and dishonoured by her unworthy ministers. I doubt if ever she stood nearer the brink of that precipice down which God has promised she shall never fall. I doubt if she ever endured a sadder lot than under that long series of monarchs who believed themselves her benefactors and protectors, and who, at the same time, refused to her liberty, peace, and honour.

If such were the miseries of the Church, still so young and so near her blood-stained cradle, what must have been the condition of the State, and of lay society? A single word is enough to define it. Paganism existed in undiminished force, as has been demonstrated by one of the most excellent historians of our own age: "Civil society, like religious society, appeared Christian. The sovereigns and the immense majority of the people had embraced Christianity; but, at bottom, civil society was pagan; it retained the institutions, the laws, and the manners of paganism. It was a society which paganism, and not Christianity, had made."[1]

And this paganism, we should not forget, was paganism under its most degenerate form. Men were still at that point where, according to Tacitus, the politics of the wisest consisted in supporting all emperors whatsoever.[2] All the Roman greatness, according to the strong expression of Montesquieu, had only served to satiate the appetite of five or six monsters. After Constantine, the sovereigns were better than these monsters, but the institutions were of less

[1] GUIZOT, *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, lec. ii. He adds: "Christian society is developed later, after the invasion of the barbarians: it belongs to modern history." We must make our acknowledgments here to the eminent man who, nearly thirty years ago, and before any Catholic attempt to regenerate history had been made, did justice to the social *rôle* of the Church, of which he had not the good fortune to be a son—insufficiently, no doubt, but with a boldness and impartiality which has been too little appreciated, even by those whom it most concerned.

[2] "Bonos imperatores voto expetere, qualescumque tolerare."—*Histor.*, iv. 8.

and less value. A hundred and twenty millions of men had still no rights save that of belonging to a single man, to a chance master, called by a caprice of the army, or an intrigue of the court, to the imperial throne. Despotism, as it grew old, became at once feebler and more vexatious. It weighed upon all and protected none. It exhausted a world which it could not even defend. The power of one, says Salvian, is the ruin of the world: "*unius honor, orbis excidium.*"[1] Peace, comfort, and security everywhere disappeared.[2] After the conversion of Constantine, as before him, the bonds of that skilful system of taxation which ended by ruining labour and property in the Roman world, were drawn tighter in every reign. This system, aided by that of the law, raised an emperor to be the sole representative of the sovereign people, and supreme proprietor of all the wealth of the empire. The impost absorbed all that accusations and confiscations had left of the patrimony of free men. Lactantius says it was necessary to buy even the liberty of breathing. According to Zozimus,[3] the fathers prostituted their daughters to have means to pay the tax. The proprietor and the citizen were nothing more than public debtors, and were treated with all the barbarity which the old Romans used to their debtors. They were thrown into prison, scourged, their wives scourged, and their children sold.[4] Torture was universally employed

[1] *De Gubernat. Dei*, iv. 4.

[2] "In omni ferme orbe Romano pax et securitas non sunt."—SALVIAN, *De Gubernat. Dei*, vii. 1.

[3] *Histor.*, ii. 38.

[4] The following incident bears indirectly upon our subject, and shows the condition of Roman and Christian Egypt in the fourth century. A brigand who had become a monk of the Thebaid, relates the following tale to the celebrated abbot Paphnuce: "Inveni aliquam formosam mulierem errantem in solitudine, fugatam ab apparitoribus et curialibus præsidis et senatorum, *propter publicum mariti debitum.* Sciscitatus sum ex ea causam fletus. Illa dixit . . . Cum maritus tempore biennii ob debitum publicum trecentorum aureorum sæpe fuerit flagellatus, et in carcere inclusus, et tres mihi carissimi filii venditi fuerint, ego recedo fugitiva . . . etiam errans per solitudinem sæpe inventa et *assidue flagellata*, jam tres dies permansi jejuna." The brigand had pity on this victim of the magistrates: he gave

as a means of tax-gathering: formerly reserved for slaves, its use was extended to all the citizens.[1] It is thus that absolute power understands and practises equality.

The Roman republic, says Salvian, expired even when she seemed still living, strangled by taxation, like the traveller who dies in the grasp of brigands. The empire, which originated amid the proscriptions of the triumvirate, worthily completed its work by a fiscal system which seemed to its despairing victims a universal proscription.[2]

The administrative system of Diocletian, aggravated by the Christian emperors, and brought to perfection by Justinian, became thus the scourge of the world. We see in Eumenes, in Lactantius, and in Salvian, who wrote more than a century after the conversion of Constantine, the picture of that oppression, the most ingenious and cruel which has ever crushed a civilised people. But it is not in the Fathers or historians, but in the very text of the imperial laws, that we find the most eloquent representation of these disgraceful plagues of the Roman world. The hypocrisy of the language then used does not suffice to disguise the brutality of the facts, nor the horrible nature of the universal slavery.[3]

The aristocracy, the first victim of despotism, deprived at

her the gold which he had stolen, and sheltered her and her children from all outrage: *citra probrum et contumeliam.* To this touch of pity he owed the mercy of God, and his conversion.—PALLADIUS, *Historia Lausiaca*, c. 63.

[1] Exemption from torture became the privilege of the nobles and municipal magistrates, and of children; but this privilege was suppressed in the case of high treason.

[2] "Extremum spiritum agens, in ea parte qua adhuc vivere videtur, tributorum vinculis quasi prædonum manibus strangulata."—*De Gubernat. Dei*, iv. 6. "Jam vero illud quam sævum, quam alienum a Barbaris, quam familiare Romanis, quod se invicem exactione proscribunt."—*Ibid.*, v. 4. See all the books of this treatise for the description of the fiscal exactions of which the imperial subjects were the victims.

[3] See especially that fine chapter of the *Histoire des Origines Mérovingiennes* of LE HUERON, entitled "Des Véritable Causes de la Dissolution de l'Empire Romain," vol. i. pp. 120–153.

once of power and independence, and replaced everywhere by officials, was smothered under the pompous and ridiculous titles of *excellency, eminence, serenity, clarissimus, perfectissimus*, which concealed their nonentity from no one, but the usurpation of which, even by carelessness or ignorance, was punished as a sacrilege. The citizens of the towns, held responsible for the taxes, and condemned to the magistracy as to the galleys, suffered, under the name of *curials*, an oppression skilfully organised, and applied without pity. A law of the two sons of Theodosius punished, by the confiscation of his goods, the impiety of the unfortunate rich man who fled out of those towns, transformed into prisons, to take refuge in the country.[1]

In the country there was no longer anything to distinguish the cultivators from the slaves; and the agricultural population, exhausted by the abominable fiscal exactions, without protection and without encouragement, grew disgusted with their labour, and fled into the woods. Those who revolted were sure of being pursued and murdered, under the name of Bagaudes, like so many wild beasts. Others preferred the rule of the Barbarians, and anticipated that rule by fleeing to them: that captivity seemed to them less dreadful than imperial slavery, and their sole wish was never again to become Romans.[2] It is not rare, says Orosius, to find Romans who prefer a free poverty among the Barbarians to the anguish of a life tormented by the exactions of Rome.

[1] "Curiales: . . . jubemur moneri ne civitates fugiant aut deserant, rus habitandi causa; fundum quem civitati prætulerint scientes fisco esse sociandum, eoque rure esse carituros, cujus causâ *impios* se, vitando patriam demonstrarint."—*L. Curiales*, 2 Cod. Theod., lib. 12, tit. 18, *Si curiales*.

[2] "Malunt sub specie captivitatis vivere liberi, quam sub specie libertatis esse captivi. . . . Unum illic omnium Romanorum votum est, ne unquam eos necesse sit in jus transire Romanum."—SALVIAN, *op. cit.*, v. 5, 8. "Interdum vi nimiæ amaritudinis etiam adventum hostium postulantes."—*Ibid.*, vii. 16. "Jam inveniuntur inter eos Romani qui malint inter Barbaros pauperem libertatem, quam inter Romanos tributariam sollicitudinem sustinere."—OROS., *Hist.*, vii. 41.

Bossuet describes the circumstances in two words: "Everything perished in the East: . . . All the West was a desert."[1] Labour withdrew; the soil remained uncultivated; the population declined. Impotence, decay, and death were everywhere. The provinces which the Barbarians and imperial officers vied in invading and wasting, had not even energy enough to shake off the yoke. "The world is dying in Rome," said the lords of Gaul to the Emperor Avitus,[2] and Rome herself seemed condemned to die, abandoned by her emperors and ravished by the Goths. Nothing remained to her of those noble days in which Roman liberty and civic majesty threw forth upon human nature a light which, thank God, cannot be forgotten.

Of those two great things, the greatest perhaps in profane history, the Roman senate and people, *senatus populusque Romanus*, we have thus ascertained the fate of one. As for the senate, more degraded still, if possible, than the people, it interfered in the government only to sanction every crime and reward every baseness. It existed during the five centuries between Augustus and Augustulus, without leaving a single act or discussion worthy of recollection. On the other hand, its records register carefully the number of acclamations with which it saluted the new emperors, and of curses with which it pursued the fallen sovereigns, even those to whom it had paid most slavish adulation. Excluded from all political power from the times of Diocletian, it existed only as a kind of great municipal council, charged with the task of dishonouring in history the name and title of the most august assembly which has ever governed men.

Nothing has ever equalled the abject condition of the Romans of the empire. Free, they had conquered and governed the world; enslaved, they could not even defend themselves. They tried a change of masters; they gave

[1] *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*, 1st part, vi. ep.; 3rd part, chap. 7.
[2] SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS, *Paneg. d'Avitus.*

themselves two, and then four: they redoubled despotism in all its shapes; nothing would do. With the ancient freedom, all virtue, all manliness disappeared. There remained only a society of officials, without strength, without honour, and without rights.

I say without rights, for in all the imperial world no one possessed even a shadow of a serious and inviolable right. I affirm it boldly, despite all the learned panegyrists of that rule. The Roman empire, type and cradle of all modern servitude, has found numerous apologists and admirers in these days, thanks to the readiness with which the task of justifying the present by theories borrowed from the past is now undertaken. The progress of civil law and democratic equality, regarded by them as the highest expression of Roman civilisation, has been specially dwelt upon.

But Roman law, which aided the patricians to organise, under the republic, the freest and strongest government which history has known, changed its face and nature under the empire.

How absurd and chimerical were the teachings or practice of civil law in a state where the person and property of every citizen might be delivered, without debate or any appeal whatever, to the will of the worst villains whom the world has ever seen! The criminal law, so humane, so protecting, and so liberal up to the time of the proscriptions, had become in the hands of the emperors a system which, according to the strong expression of Bacon,[1] tortured the laws in order to torture men. As for political law, it was given up to such anarchy that, of the thirty-four emperors who reigned from Commodus to Diocletian, in the golden age of Roman jurisprudence, thirty were killed by their successors. I confess I do not know in all history a spectacle more repulsive or grotesque than that of the labours of all these jurisconsults, who, on questions of

[1] See the learned *Essai sur les Lois Criminelles des Romains*, by EDOUARD LA BOULAYE, distinguished by the Institute. 1845.

usufruct and usucapion, trusteeships and interdicts, could split a hair, but who could not, during five centuries, discover the least barrier to the sanguinary violence of a horde of Prætorians, nor to the monstrous caprices of a Heliogabalus or of a Commodus.

As for equality, it had no other guarantee than the title of Roman citizen, prostituted by Caracalla as a supreme derision to the enslaved world. This worthy successor of that Cæsar who had thoughts of making his horse a consul, knew well what he did in bestowing upon all the provincials exempted from certain imposts, the full civic right of paying to the treasury all that the treasury exacted. The people who were honoured by that title knew also how much it was worth. The name of "Roman citizen," Salvian tells us, hitherto so much esteemed and dearly purchased, was regarded now not only as a vain and disgraceful title, but as a kind of abomination.[1]

Let us pass over the decay of the arts, the meanness of literature, the non-existence of the sciences; but we must acknowledge that in this so-called Christian society, the moral poverty is a thousand times greater than the material, and that servitude has crushed souls even more than bodies. Everything is enervated, attenuated, and decrepid. Not a single great man nor illustrious individual rises to the surface of that mire. Eunuchs and sophists of the Court govern the State without control, experiencing no resistance but from the Church. After Theodosius, the throne of Constantine acquired a degree of public respect only by the brief reign of Pulcheria, a truly Christian woman and saint. But if, here and there, a great captain, a man of heart and talent, rises above the crowd, we see him fall like Stilicho, like Aetius, like Belisarius, under the murderous jealousy of a master who cannot tolerate either a power or fame which is not his own by the side of his omnipotence. While they live their renown procures

[1] *De Gubernat. Dei*, v.

them only proscription, and even death does not suffice to give it lustre. The infected air they breathed seems to have paled their glory: it has neither distinction nor charm in history.

To discover some trace of that greatness and strength which are the legitimate inheritance of the most noble creature of God, we must turn to the Church. There alone, in the various orders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and despite the yoke of the theological emperors, it was still possible to live, to struggle, and even to shine.

The great and the small, the last scions of the patricians of Rome, the old races of the conquered countries, the plebeians of all the provinces who had been dignified *en masse* with the despised title of Roman citizens, after that name had lost all its value,—all could seek again their lost dignity and forfeited freedom in the city of God. The Church alone offered a sufficient sustenance to all the energy, activity, intelligence, and self-devotion which remained among them; for she invited all to an inexhaustible series of sacrifices and victories. Genius, glory, virtue, courage, freedom —all that makes life honourable, even in a human point of view—was to be found only in the Church, amid these great controversies, and incessant struggles for the salvation of souls and the triumph of truth, in which she had always reason, genius, and right on her side, though these were not enough to gain her cause before the throne of her protectors.

But God, by the side of the spiritual society instituted and regulated by Himself, has created temporal society; and if He has there, as everywhere, reserved to Himself the secret conduct of events, and the charge of striking the great blows of His infallible justice, He has given up its ordinary government to the free and intelligent activity of man. To withdraw life, or all that makes life valuable, from this temporal society—to reduce it to stagnation, servitude, indifference, and moral misery—to recognise in spiritual society only the right of living and increasing, and in religious controversy alone the means of moving

souls to impassioned sentiments—is to thrust humanity to the edge of a precipice. This condition, as well as its contrary excess, is to be seen repeatedly in history; but such a state of things is repugnant to the laws of creation. It is neither in conformity with the will of God, nor the interests of the Church, to condemn civil society to the condition of a nonentity. A man has other rights than that of choosing between the priesthood and slavery. There is nothing which approaches nearer to heaven than a monastery inhabited by monks who have willingly separated themselves from the world; but to transform the world into a cloister, peopled by unwilling monks, would be to create beforehand a counterfeit hell. God has never made the slavery and degradation of the world a condition of the liberty of His Church. Happily, other times shall follow, in which, by the side of a Church triumphant, free, and fertile, shall rise a society ardent and humble in its faith, but also energetic, warlike, generous, and manly, even in its errors; in which authority shall be at once sanctified and limited, and freedom ennobled by sacrifice and charity; in which heroes shall crowd upon saints; in which cloisters, however closely peopled, shall no longer be the sole asylum for upright and noble souls; in which many men—not all, but many—shall regain the full command of themselves; in which the sovereigns shall have to render an account to their people, the strong to the feeble, and all to God.

In the fourth and fifth centuries the very dawning of that necessary renovation was not yet visible. The old imperial world existed still. Christianity had accepted that abject condition, as it accepts all, with the supernatural confidence of aiding what was good in it, and of lessening the evil. But despite her divine force and origin—despite the humble and zealous devotion of the Fathers and pontiffs to the decrepid majesty of the Cæsars—despite her men of genius and her saints—Christianity did not succeed in transforming the ancient world. Had she succeeded in taking

full possession, with the elements which then constituted it, she could only have made a kind of Christian China. God spared her that abortion: but the history of this period remains an ever-memorable example of the powerlessness of genius and sanctity to overcome the corruption engendered by despotism.

The old world was then at the point of death. The empire gave way slowly, in shame and contempt, stricken by a melancholy weakness which did not even inspire pity. Everything dropped into incurable decay. Such was the fate of the Roman empire two centuries after it had become Christian. In spiritual affairs it was on the road to that schism which, under the Byzantine Cæsars, separated from unity and truth more than half of the world converted by the apostles. In temporal affairs it issued in the miserable *régime* of the Lower Empire, the hardest censure we can pronounce upon which, is to name its name.

In order that the Church should save society, a new element was necessary in the world, and a new force in the Church. Two invasions were required—that of the Barbarians from the north, and that of the monks from the south.

They came;—first the Barbarians. Behold them struggling with the Romans, enervated by slavery, and with the emperors, powerless in the midst of their omnipotence.

First obscure, victims and prisoners disdained by the first Cæsars; then auxiliaries, by turns sought and feared; then irresistible adversaries; at last victors and masters of the humiliated empire: they come, not as a torrent which passes on, but as a flood which advances, draws back, returns, and finally remains master of the invaded soil. They advance, they withdraw, they return, they remain and triumph. Those among them who were desirous of arresting their course and allying themselves with the terrified Romans, are in their turn set aside, passed over, and surmounted by the tide which follows. Behold them! They come down the valley of the Danube, which puts them on

the road to Byzantium and Asia Minor; they ascend its tributary streams, and thus reach the summits of the Alps, from whence they burst upon Italy. They pass the Rhine, cross the Vosges, the Cevennes, the Pyrenees, and inundate Gaul and Spain. The East imagined that it would be spared: vain delusion! The storm bursts from the heights of Caucasus, and overflows these regions in their turn. The wolves of the north (thus St. Jerome entitles them), after having devoured everything, come to drink in the waters of the Euphrates. Egypt, Phœnicia, Palestine — all the countries which they do not visit in their first incursion —are already taken captive by fear. It is not one nation alone, like the Roman people, but twenty different and independent races. "For many years," says St. Jerome again, "Roman blood has flowed daily under the blows of the Goth, of the Sarmatian, of the Quadi, of the Alan, of the Hun, of the Vandal, of the Marcoman."[1] It is not the army of a single conqueror like Alexander and Cæsar; there are twenty kings unknown but intrepid, having soldiers and not subjects, accountable for their authority to their priests and warriors, and obliged by force of perseverance and audacity to earn a pardon for their power. They all obey an irresistible instinct, and unconsciously carry with them the destinies and institutions of the Christendom to come.

Visible instruments of divine justice, they come by intuition to avenge the nations oppressed and the martyrs slain. They shall destroy, but it will be to give a substitute for that which they have destroyed; and, besides, they will kill nothing that deserves to live, or that retains the conditions of life. They shall shed blood in torrents, but they shall renew by their own blood the exhausted sap of Europe. They bring with them fire and sword, but also strength and life. Through a thousand crimes and a thousand evils,

[1] "Quotidie Romanus sanguis effunditur. . . . Ecce tibi ex ultimis Caucasi rupibus immissi in nos . . . septentrionis lupi."—S. HIERON., *De Laude Nepotiani*, c. ii. Comp. *Epist. ad Ocean. de Vita S. Fabiolæ.*

they shall reveal, though still under a confused form, two things which Roman society has ceased to know—the dignity of man, and the respect for woman. They have instincts rather than principles to guide them; but when these instincts shall have been fertilised and purified by Christianity, out of them shall spring catholic chivalry and royalty. One sentiment above all shall be derived from them, which was unknown in the Roman empire, which perhaps even the most illustrious pagans were strangers to, and which is always incompatible with despotism—the sentiment of honour: "That secret and profound spring of modern society, which is nothing else than the independence and inviolability of the human conscience, superior to all powers, all tyrannies, and all external force."[1]

They carry with them, in addition, freedom—not certainly such freedom as we have since conceived and possessed, but the germs and conditions of all freedom; that is to say, the spirit of resistance to excessive power, a manful impatience of the yoke, and a profound consciousness of personal right, and the individual value of every soul before other men as before God.[2]

Freedom and honour! Rome and the world had been bankrupt in these qualities since the times of Augustus. We owe these gifts to our ancestors the Barbarians.

In a purely religious point of view, more than one great heart among the Christians had recognised at once the mysterious characteristics by which God had distinguished those races which seemed to proceed only out of His wrath. With a confidence which was not shaken by the fury of the

[1] OZANAM, *La Civilisation Chrétienne au* V^e *Siècle.*

[2] "The Germans have given us the spirit of freedom, such as we know and realise it at the present time, the right and possession of each individual, master of himself and of his actions and destiny, so long as he wrongs no other. . . . It is to German customs that this distinctive character of our civilisation is traceable. The fundamental idea of freedom, in modern Europe, came to it from its conquerors."—GUIZOT, *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, leç. vii.

hurricane which crossed their path, and which lasted two centuries, this discovery was declared. Amid the calamities and sufferings of the first invasion of the Goths, St. Augustine remarked the marvellous forbearance of the soldiers of Alaric before the tombs of the martyrs: he even went so far as to speak of the mercy and humility of these terrible victors.[1] Salvian does not hesitate to say that the Barbarians, even heretics, led a better life than the Romans, even those who were orthodox. "Their modesty," he says elsewhere, "purifies the earth, all stained by Roman debauchery."[2] Paul Orosius, a disciple of St. Augustine, compared them to Alexander, and to the Romans of the republican times; and he adds: "The Germans now overturn the world, but if (which God forbid!) they end by remaining its masters, and govern it according to their own customs, posterity perhaps will one day salute with the title of great kings those in whom we can only see enemies."

Let us not exaggerate, however, nor anticipate the truth. The germs only of the great conquests of the future existed amid the fermentation of these confused and turbulent masses. At the first glance, it is cruelty, violence, a love of blood and devastation, which seems to animate them; and, as among all savages, these explosions of natural brutality are allied to all the refinements of deceit.

These undaunted men, who knew so well how to vindicate human dignity against their sovereigns, respected it so little that they slaughtered entire populations as if for sport. These warriors, who knelt around their prophetesses, and recognised something sacred in woman,[3] made their captives too often the playthings of their lust or cruelty,[4] and their kings at least practised polygamy.

[1] "Misericordia et humilitas etiam immanium Barbarorum."—*De Civit. Dei*, i. 4. Compare cap. 1 et 7.

[2] *De Gubernat. Dei*, v. 2; vii. 6.

[3] "Inesse quin etiam sanctum aliquid."—TACITUS, *De Mor. German.*

[4] See, among other examples, the atrocious sufferings inflicted upon three hundred Frank maidens given as hostages to the Thuringians.

In respect to Christianity, their attitude was uncertain, their adhesion tardy and equivocal. If there were early Christians among the Goths—if, from the beginning of the peace of the Church, German bishops appeared in the Councils of Arles, Nicæa, and Sardica—if, at the sack of Rome in 410, Alaric commanded the Church, the sacred vessels, and the Christian women to be respected—if the barbaric nations as a whole, personified by their two most formidable chiefs, seemed to stand arrested before St. Leo, who alone could control Genseric, and make Attila fall back —it is not the less true that two centuries of invasions into the bosom of the Christian world had not sufficed to identify the victors with the religion of the vanquished. The Saxons, the Franks, the Gepides, and the Alans remained idolaters; and, a thousand times worse, in proportion as these people were converted to Christianity, they became the prey of a miserable heresy. Truth served them only as a bridge from one abyss to another. When it was repressed by Theodosius in the empire, Arianism turned aside to seduce and govern the future victors of the empire. The Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Herules, the Burgundians, became Arians. Euric and the Sueves in Spain, Genseric and the Vandals in Africa, sacrificed thousands of martyrs to that doctrine which was the idol of all tyrants, because it encouraged at the same time the revolt of reason against faith, and the usurpations of secular power upon the Church.

And soon the corruption of Roman manners pressed upon and infected these young and passionate races. Their energetic vitality abandoned itself to the caresses of a decrepid civilisation. Conquest was on the point of becoming a lawless revel, and the world was in danger of having changed its masters without changing its destiny.

Who then shall discipline these indomitable races? Who (a) shall shape them to the great art of living and governing? Who shall teach them to found kingdoms and commonwealths? Who shall soften without enervating them?

Who shall preserve them from contagion? Who shall prevent them from precipitating themselves into corruption and rotting before they were ripe?

It will be the Church, but the Church by the monks. From the depths of the deserts of Egypt and the East, God brought forth a host of black-robed men, more intrepid and patient, more indefatigable and less indulgent to themselves, than Romans or Barbarians ever were. They spread themselves noiselessly over all the empire, and when the hour of its ruin had come, they are to be found everywhere, in the West as well as in the East. The Barbarians came: and in proportion to their progress, by their side, before, behind, wherever they had passed with fire and death, other armies come to encamp in silence, other colonies form, arrange, and devote themselves to heal the miseries of invasion, and to gather the fruits of victory. At length, when the destroyers had invaded, ravaged, and conquered everything, a great man will appear. Benedict is destined to be the legislator of labour, of voluntary continence and poverty; he shall count his children, who shall be also his soldiers, by thousands. From among the Barbarians themselves his followers shall arise; their chief shall one day fall at his feet. He will raise him up as a vassal and auxiliary. He will write a rule which, during six centuries, shall light Europe like a Pharos of salvation, and be the law, the force, and the life of those pacific legions, which were destined in their turn to inundate Europe, but only to fertilise her, to raise her ruins, to cultivate her devastated fields, people her deserts, and conquer her conquerors.

The Roman empire, without the Barbarians, was an abyss of servitude and corruption. The Barbarians, without the monks, were chaos. The Barbarians and the monks united recreated a world which was to be called Christendom.[1]

[1] This First Book appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of the 1st January 1855.

BOOK II

MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE EAST

SUMMARY

Origin of monastic life in antiquity, in the ancient law, in the Gospel. —It is originated by Jesus Christ.—The monks appear, to succeed the martyrs and restrain the Barbarians.—Martyrdom of St. Febronia, nun at Nisibis.—THE FATHERS OF THE DESERT.—THE THEBAID.—ST. ANTHONY, the first of the abbots: his influence in the Church; multitude of his disciples; his struggle against Arianism.—ST. PAUL, first hermit.—St. Pacome, author of the first written rule, founder of Tabenne.—The two Ammons.—The two Macarii.—Meeting with a tribune upon the Nile. —Prodigious number of monks of the Thebaid: their laborious life, their charity, their studies, their zeal for the orthodox faith.—St. Athanasius concealed in the Thebaid. — Paradise in the desert. — NUNNERIES in Egypt: Alexandra, Euphrosyne. Converted courtesans; Pelagia. — St. Euphrasia.—The monks of Sinai.—Hilarion introduces monastic life into Palestine.—Hilarion and Epiphanius in the island of Cyprus.—St. Ephrem in Mesopotamia.—St. Simeon Stylites in Syria.—Martyr monks in Persia. —ST. BASIL AND ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS in Cappadocia: their friendship, their monastic life, their part in the Church.—Violent opposition against the monks among the Pagans and Arians, the rhetoricians and sophists, and among many Christians.—ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM constitutes himself their apologist: his treatise against the detractors of monastic life.—His conduct towards them as Archbishop of Constantinople.—He is maltreated by the monks at Cæsarea.—The monks at Antioch under Theodosius.—Telemachus puts a stop to the fights of the gladiators.—DECAY OF THE MONKS OF THE EAST, who end by becoming slaves of Islamism and accomplices of schism.

BOOK II

MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE EAST

Lo maggior don, che Dio per sue larghezze
Fesse creando, ed alla sua bontate
Più conformato, e quel ch' ei più apprezza,
Fu della volontà la libertate,
Di che le creature intelligenti
E tutte, e sole, furo e son dotate.
Or ti parrà, se tu quinci argomenti,
L' alto valor del voto, s' è si fatto,
Che Dio consenta, quando tu consenti.
Che nel fermar tra Dio e l' uomo il patto
Vittima fassi di questo tesoro.

—DANTE, *Parad.*, c. v.

THE monks were now in conflict with the Barbarians. In the fourth century began that apostolical struggle and mission, which continued till the twelfth century, and ended only after the final constitution of Catholic Europe.

But whence came the monks? and what is a monk? It is important to answer this question briefly. A monk is a Christian who puts himself apart from the world, in order more surely to work out his eternal salvation. He is a man who withdraws from other men, not in hatred or contempt of them, but for the love of God and his neighbour, and to serve them so much the better, as he shall have more and more purified and regulated his soul.

This idea of retirement and solitude is the root of the very name of monk, which comes from the Greek word *μόνος*, solitary. But as many Christians have in all ages obeyed the same impulse, these solitaries have joined each

other; they have thus reconstituted the social life from which they appeared to flee; and that life, founded upon an absolute community in thought and action, has formed the basis and strength of the monastic condition.

But it was not enough for a monk to separate himself from the world; he had also to abstain from what is lawful in the world. The monk is, then, essentially, a man who deprives himself of that which he might enjoy without reproach. He accepts not only the precepts of the Gospel, but its advice. To avoid what is forbidden, he renounces what is permitted. To reach goodness, he aspires to perfection. To make sure of his salvation, he would do more than is necessary to save him. He binds himself to a kind of chastity, of submission, and of poverty, not required from all Christians. He renounces, by a generous effort of his free choice, the ties of marriage and family, individual property, and personal will; and he puts this triple sacrifice under the safeguard of an irrevocable promise, of a vow. Having thus triumphed over his body by continence, over his soul by obedience, and over the world by voluntary poverty, he comes, three times a victor, to offer himself to God, and to take his place in the first rank of that army which is called the Church.

This condition of life is as old as the world. It has two origins—a natural and a supernatural.

Yes; this life of solitude and privation, so contrary in appearance to all the inclinations of man, finds its roots in human nature itself. All men, at some certain moment of their life, have felt that mysterious and powerful attraction towards solitude. Every nation has recognised and honoured it; all religions have adopted and sanctioned it. The philosophers and moralists of paganism have emulated each other in glorifying that impulse of nature. The oriental world pursued it passionately. India, for three thousand years, has had her ascetics, who pushed to delirium the science of mortification and the practice of voluntary chas-

tisements. They are still to be found, wandering over the world, or living in vast communities in all the nations which recognise the law of Buddha. They have produced nothing, preserved nothing: the pride of error, and the corruption of idleness, have rendered them useless to the human mind as to society; but, even in their abject condition, they bear an immortal testimony to that profound instinct of the soul which the only true religion has transferred into an inexhaustible source of virtues and benefits.

In the midst of ancient civilisation, Pythagoras and his disciples, who already went by the name of cenobites,[1] Plato in his *Republic*, Epictetus in his *Cebetis Tabula*, and many others, have recommended this manner of existence as the last goal of wisdom. But Christianity alone has known how to discipline these fugitive impressions, to give them an efficacious bearing and a permanent energy, by the institution of the monastic order. She alone was entitled to offer a divine sanction, an infallible aim, and an eternal recompense, to that inclination of nature acknowledged by all.

By the side of this purely human and natural origin of the monastic life, we must also acknowledge one supernatural and celestial. In the ancient law, where everything is a figure or symbol of the new law, models of a solitary and tranquil life consecrated entirely to the cultivation of the soul are already to be found. Samuel, in whom the chain of prophets properly commences, Elijah especially, then St. John the Baptist,[2] have been regarded by many, and not without reason, as the types and first masters of monastic life.

The apostle himself describes to us the prophets clad in goatskins, wandering in the deserts, on the mountains, in the caves and dens of the earth.[3] St. Augustine shows

[1] JAMBLIC., *De Vit. Pithag.*, 5.

[2] The Greek Fathers have entitled him *Prince of anchorites* and *Prince of monks*.

[3] "In sheepskins and goatskins; . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."—Heb. xi. 37, 38.

them sequestered from the people, buried in retirement, far from cities, forming communities and schools, vowed to prayer, to labour with their hands, and to study.[1] They were clothed in sackcloth or the skins of beasts.[2] Their poverty was visible in all their life. Elisha had for furniture only a pallet, a table, a chair, and a candlestick.[3] He accepted no presents except barley-bread and a little meal, such as are given to the poor.[4] The frugality of the prophets was not less remarkable. The angel gave Elijah only bread and water for a long journey. Obadiah, the steward of Ahab, a man who feared God, says Scripture, nourished a hundred prophets with bread and water in a cave. Elisha cooked wild herbs for the food of his brethren, the sons of the prophets.[5]

Another example less known is that of the Rechabites.[6] Nine hundred years before Christ, in the time of Jehu, king of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab, a just man, interdicted his descendants from living under a roof, from drinking wine, and from possessing lands, and bound them to dwell apart, under tents, all the days of their life. Three centuries afterwards, Jeremiah found them scrupulously faithful to the rule prescribed by their ancestor, and addressed to them, in the name of God, these words—"Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, . . . therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever."[7]

Perhaps we might trace in them, if not the ancestors, at

[1] *De Civit. Dei*, xviii. 41.

[2] Isa. xx. 2; Dan. ix. 3; Zech. xiii. 4. Compare Rev. xi. 3, and 2 Kings i. 8.

[3] 2 Kings iv. 10. [4] Verse 42. [5] Verse 39.

[6] Bossuet ranks them with the monks in this passage of the *Elevations*: "If the Rechabites and the monks are justly so scrupulous, and so much ashamed of breaking their rules, how much should we tremble lest we fail in obedience to the law of God," &c.—*XVth Sem. 7th Elevat.*

[7] Jer. xxxv. 18, 19.

least the models of the Essenes and Therapeutists, the monks of Judaism, who lived, the first in the times of the Maccabees, upon the shores of the Dead Sea, and the last, two centuries later, in Asia Minor and Egypt. Both lived in the desert, in cells, preserving celibacy, renouncing property, pleasure, and delicate food, and consecrating their time to manual labour or to the study of the Holy Scriptures. Porphyry, and Pliny the naturalist, have spoken with admiration of the Essenes.[1] Philo, the most eloquent of the Jews,[2] has described the pure and self-denying life of the Therapeutists; he shows them inhabiting cells upon an eminence beyond the Lake Mœris, precisely upon the Mount Nitria, so celebrated since then in the history of the Fathers of the desert. Eusebius, it is known, made them out to be Christians, and the evangelist St. Mark has been supposed their founder.[3] This opinion appears ill-founded. It is difficult, however, not to see in these solitaries the direct precursors of the monastic order.

But it belonged to the Gospel to fertilise, to perfect, and to perpetuate these examples. The words of the Redeemer, the Son of God, are express. He said to the young noble, whom He loved at the first glance, and who asked of Him the way to life eternal—"One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."[4] And again—"There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the

[1] PORPHYR., *De Abstinentia*, iv. 11; PLIN., *Hist. Natur.*, v.; THONISSEN, *Encycl. Popul.*, t. i. p. 86.

[2] PHILO, *De Vita Contemplativa*, lib. i. Compare PALLAD., *Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 7.

[3] S. HIERONYM., *De Script. Eccles. in Marco*; EUSEB., *Hist. Ecclesiast.*, 17. St. Epiphanius, Sozomenes, Cassianus, say the same. Compare D. CALMET, *Dict. de la Bible*, v° *Thérapeutes*; HENRIC. VALESH, *Annot. in Euseb.*, p. 35. Compare DOELLINGER, *Heidenthum und Judenthum*, p. 759.

[4] Mark x. 21. Compare Matt. xix. 21; Luke xviii. 22.

gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *with persecutions;* and in the world to come, eternal life." [1] Since these divine words were diffused through the world, men have been found, who, far from being repelled by the sternness of the language, or saddened as he was who heard it first,[2] have felt in it a sweetness and attraction beyond all the seductions of the world, and who, throwing themselves in a multitude into the narrow way, have undertaken to prove that there is nothing impracticable to human weakness in the counsels of evangelical perfection. This has been found to be the case during eighteen centuries, and is still so, despite the dislike and prohibitions of the false wisdom of modern times. Governed by these words of the Gospel, the most illustrious fathers, doctors, and councils have declared religious life to be founded by Jesus Christ Himself, and first practised by His apostles. The highest authorities have agreed to recognise that it was born with the Church, and that it has never ceased to coexist with her.[3]

It may be said of it, as of the Church herself, that it exists by right divine.[4]

We know with certainty, by the narrative of the Acts of

[1] Mark x. 29, 30.

[2] "This is a hard saying."—John vi. 60. "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."—Mark x. 22.

[3] "Philosophiam a Christo introductam."—S. JOAN. CHRYSOST., *Hom.* 17 *ad Popul. Antioch;* S. HIERON., Epist. 120 (alias 150), 118, 130. "Primum in Ecclesia, imo a quo cœpit Ecclesia . . . cujus apostoli institutores . . . exstiterunt."—S. BERNARD., *Apolog. ad Guill. Abbat.*, c. 10. "Cœnobitarum disciplina a tempore prædicationis apostolicæ sumpsit exordium."—CASSIAN., *Collation.* 18, c. 5. "Sacrum quoque monasticum ordinem a Deo inspiratum, et ab ipsis apostolis fundatum."—*Concil. ad Theod. Villam.*, an. 844, c. 3.

[4] "Status religiosus secundum se et quoad substantiam suam ab ipso Christo immediate traditus et institutus fuit, atque ita dici potest esse de jure divino, non præcipiente, sed consulente."—SUAREZ, *Tractatus* vii. lib. 3, c. 2.

the Apostles, that the first Christians lived as the monks have lived since. Coming forth from the guest-chamber, they to whom had been given the happiness of seeing the Lord Jesus with their own eyes, and who listened every day to the words of the apostles, had but one heart and one soul: they put everything in common—fortune, prayer, labour—they sold all their goods to consecrate the produce to the common need, and thus destroyed at a blow both poverty and riches. It is said expressly, and more than once repeated, that all who believed lived in this fashion.[1] History has not recorded how these bonds relaxed and were dissolved at last, but we can understand how they became impossible, in proportion as the number of Christians increased, and in presence of family rights and interests; at any rate, they lasted long enough to authorise Eusebius and St. Jerome in asserting that the first-known monks were no other than the first disciples of Jesus Christ.[2]

We might even affirm, that during the three first centuries all Christians retained a certain monastic character. They were austere and even rigid in the severity of their faith and the young ardour of their enthusiasm. They remained pure in the depths of universal corruption. Their life was more or less hidden amid pagan society. They were of that old world as if they had not been. Then came persecutions which shortened the way to heaven; these took the place of penitence and trial. The dungeon of the martyr was as good, says Tertullian, as the cell of a prophet.[3]

[1] "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. . . . And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked."—Acts ii. 44, 45; iv. 32, 34, 35, 37.

[2] "Ex quo apparet talem primum Christo credentium fuisse Ecclesiam quales nunc monachi esse nituntur et cupiunt."—*De Vir. Illustr.*, c. 8.

[3] "Hoc præstat carcer Christiano quod eremus prophetis."—TERTULL., *Ad Martyres.*

In the intervals of peace which the persecutions left to them, they bound themselves to exercises and penitences which have since terrified our weakness. There were besides a great number among them, whom a desire for perfection led back to the self-abnegation of the earliest days. These devoted themselves to the practice of evangelical precepts by renouncing marriage and property. They condemned themselves to fasts, to silence, to every kind of austerity; such Christians, says Bossuet, were solitary, and changed towns into deserts.[1] Sometimes, indeed, they endeavoured to live thus in the midst of the Christian community; but more frequently they fled from the cities, from the noise and commerce of men absorbed in the cares of lucre or of public affairs. Thus, far from all contact with the crowd, and even with the family, they drew near to God and the Divine Mediator, who had so recently shed His blood upon Calvary. Their example was always contagious, and this tradition was never interrupted; each successive generation of Christians furnished recruits to that race, which reproduced itself only in spirit. The name of *Ascetics*[2] and of *Anchorites*,[3] and even that of *Monks*,[4] or solitaries, was bestowed upon them, and when they lived together, their common dwelling was called a *monastery*;[5] it was then a condition and profession admitted in the Church.[6] Virgins and widows, inspired by the love of God, rivalled these venerable men in courage, austerity, and penitence, and, like them, formed themselves into communities. Both were regarded everywhere as the

[1] *Sermon sur les Obligations de la Vie Religieuse.*

[2] From ἄσκησις, exercise.

[3] From ἀναχωρέω, to put one's self apart, to withdraw.

[4] See above, p. 213.

[5] Μοναστήριον, place for living alone; this was the name which was formerly given, according to Dollinger, to the oratories of the Therapeutists.

[6] Dom Bulteau, in book i. of his *Essai de l'Histoire Monastique d'Orient*, Paris, 1680, has collected numerous testimonies taken from the Fathers and Greek chronologies, which prove the perpetuity of the ascetic life during the first centuries of the Church, but he acknowledges that all these authorities are not equally reliable.

flower of that harvest which the Son of man came to gather on earth.

But the time arrived when this germ was to develop itself with prodigious fertility. This was at the period of the last persecutions and first invasions of the Barbarians, between the reign of Decius and that of Diocletian. All at once the deserts were filled with solitaries, who sought there a refuge from Roman corruption, from the cruelty of the Cæsars, and from the barbarity of the future victors of Rome. And the empire learned that besides the Christians, who, mingled with pagans, formed already the half of the world, there existed immense reserves of men, still more ardently devoted to the new law. The monks appeared. They came at the appointed moment to replace the martyrs and to restrain the Barbarians.

And more than one monk began by claiming his place among the martyrs.[1] There were even nuns whose names are reckoned among those immortal virgins, whose tortures and invincible resistance to pagan lust and cruelty form one of the most heroic pages of the history of the Church. We must quote, at least, one glorious example. During the persecution of Diocletian, there was at Nisibis in Mesopotamia[2] a monastery of fifty virgins. One of them, Febronia, aged twenty-five, was celebrated at once for the marvellous brilliancy of her beauty,[3] the extreme austerity of her life,[4] the depth of her ascetic knowledge, and the eloquent exhortations which the noble matrons of the town came every

[1] Dom Bulteau quotes numerous examples of these (*op. cit.*), but with some reserve, founded on the doubtful worth of the Greek Church calendars.

[2] According to others, at Sibapte, in Syria.

[3] "Quas diligenter in ascetica erudiebat palestra. Hæc formosa admodum et corporis proceritate spectabilis, tanta excellebat venustate vultus, ut floridam speciei talis elegantiam nullus oculus satis possit exprimere. Fama, excellentia doctrinæ, celebrem tota urbe Febroniam redderet."—*Vita et Martyrium S. Febroniæ, auct. Thomaide, teste oculato*, in Greek and Latin, ap. ACT. SS. BOLLANDIST., tom. v. Junii, pp. 19–25.

[4] She ate only every alternate day, and slept on a plank, a handbreadth and a half broad—"sesquipalmum."—*Ibid.*

Friday to hear from her lips. But out of respect for the modesty and reserve of her spiritual daughter, the abbess caused a veil to be held before the seat of the young nun when she spoke, so that she had never been seen from her most tender infancy, not only by any man, but even by any woman of the world.[1] The young widow of a senator, still a pagan, and destined by her family to a second marriage, desired, at any risk, to make acquaintance with this learned and pious nun, and introduced herself into the convent under the disguise of a foreign sister. They passed an entire night in reading the Gospel and conferring upon Christian doctrine, embraced each other and wept together, and the senator's wife left the convent converted to the faith of Christianity, and determined to preserve the chastity of her widowhood. "Who then," said Febronia to the abbess, "was that travelling nun, who wept as if she had never heard the Holy Scriptures explained before?" "It was Hieria," answered the abbess—"Hieria, the widow of the senator." "Ah!" said Febronia, "why did not you tell me? for I spoke to her as to a sister."[2] The noble widow became in truth the sister and friend of the nun; she remained with her during a serious illness which confined Febronia to the narrow plank of wood on which she took her repose, and prevented her from fleeing, with the bishop, the clergy, the monks, and most of her companions, when Selenus, the minister of imperial cruelty, charged with the execution of the decrees against the Christians, arrived at Nisibis. Denounced because of her beauty, Febronia was

1 "Adolescentula admodum studiosa, facta est multiscia. Sextis feriis, cum in oratorio convenissent sorores, jubebat Bryena ut illis Febronia legeret, quoniam autem matronæ nobiles tali die ad orationem idem confluebant spiritualis doctrinæ gratia, jubebat Bryena velum tendi, post quod lectionem perageret illa."—*Vita et Martyrium S. Febroniæ*, &c., p. 19; compare p. 25.

2 "Post mutua iterum oscula et reciprocas lacrymas: Obsecro te, mater, quænam fuit illa peregrina monacha; in cui Thomais: Ipsa est Hieria senatrix. Ecce enim tanquam sorori locuta sum ei."—*Ibid.*

dragged before the tribunal of the persecutor: he asked her if she was free or a slave: she answered, "A slave, and the slave of Christ."[1] Stripped of her garments, and given up to all the tortures which the rage of expiring paganism had invented against Christian weakness and modesty, she endured their insults and torments with a heroic calm. The judge reproached her with making so much account of her beauty that she did not blush at her nudity. "My Christ knows well," said she, "that till this day I have not seen the face of a man. But thou, insensate judge," added the victim, with that boldness which we find in the acts of Agatha, of Agnes, and of Cecilia, "tell me what athlete presents himself at the Olympian games without disrobing himself? and does he not remain naked until he has vanquished his adversary? To work then, that I may strive against thy father the devil, to the scorn of all thy torments."[2] Her teeth and her tongue were torn from her mouth in succession; her breasts, her feet, and her hands were cut off. The old abbess, who witnessed at a distance the progress of that cruel struggle, uttered great cries, and prayed with a loud voice in the Syrian language that her dear Febronia might resist to the end; the people uttered anathemas on Diocletian and his gods. Hieria addressed public imprecations to the wretch Selenus.[3] Finally the heroic virgin was

[1] "Quidam pessimorum militum cursim accessit ad Selenum, nuntiavitque ei quod inventa sit in monasterio puella formosissima. Dic mihi, adolescentula, cujus conditionis es, serva an libera? Serva, inquit Febronia. Cujusnam vero? inquit ille. Hæc vero, Christi."—*Vita et Martyrium S. Febroniæ, &c.*, pp. 24, 26.

[2] "Impudens, scio quod gloriaris ea, qua polles, pulchritudine, et ideo nec ignominiam reputas nuditatem corporis tui, sed decorum reputas ita te nudam conspici. Novit Christus meus quod usque modo nunquam viri faciem cognoverim. Dic mihi, stulte et insensate judex, quis in Olympiaco decertaturus agone, luctus aggressus est unquam vestimentis indutus? Eia! quandonam congrediar cum patre tuo diabolo, tua contemnens tormenta?"—*Ibid.*, p. 27.

[3] "Diu sic orans prostravit se humi atque clamabat, *Bra, Bra, Bra*, dialecto Syriaca. Non pauci abibant clamantes anathema Diocletiano et diis ejus."—*Ibid.*, pp. 29, 32.

beheaded. Her blood was the seed not only of Christians, but of the religious. The two nephews of Selenus declared themselves Christians, and embraced monastic life; and the noble Hieria, giving herself and all her possessions to the monastery, deposited her bracelets, her jewels, and all her ornaments, in the coffin of her friend; then throwing herself on her knees before the abbess, "Take me," said she, "I beg of you, my mother—take me for your servant instead of Febronia."[1]

Febronia was henceforward quoted by the bishops of Mesopotamia as the model of nuns. The anniversary of her agony became the great *fête* of the monasteries of that country. Her life was written by a nun who had been an eyewitness of her martyrdom; and tradition records, that at the nightly prayers, the spirit of the holy martyr was seen to reappear in her place in the choir, as if to join her sisters in their devotions.[2]

But Constantine succeeded to Diocletian. The peace of the Church was proclaimed. Such sufferings became rare and exceptional. The martyrs had accomplished their mission: the monks rose up to continue their work. There remained, indeed, under a different form, the same war to wage, the same enemy to vanquish. "The persecution," says Bossuet, "made fewer solitaries than the peace and triumph of the Church. The Christians, who were so simple, and such enemies to luxury, feared a peace which flattered the senses more than they had feared the cruelty of tyrants. The deserts became peopled by innumerable angels who lived in mortal bodies without holding to the earth."[3]

The most trustworthy judgment accordingly accepts the

[1] "Obsecro te, mater mea, suscipe me famulam tuam in locum Febroniæ."—*Vita et Martyrium S. Febroniæ*, &c., pp. 29, 32.

[2] "Tales oportet esse monasteriorum præfectas. . . . Apparet S. Febronia in loco suo, . . . psallentum cum sororibus."—*Ibid.*, pp. 33, 35.

[3] Discourse on the Advantages and Duties of the Religious Life. This discourse is attributed by some to Bossuet, by others to Fénélon.

end of the third century as the period of the regular constitution of the monastic order. Egypt, that antique and mysterious cradle of history, that land already consecrated in the memory of Christians as having been the prison of the people of God and the refuge of the infant Jesus and His mother—Egypt was again chosen to be the cradle of the new world, created by Christian faith and virtue. Monastic life was finally inaugurated there, amid the deserts, by the Pauls, the Anthonys, the Pacomes, and their numerous disciples. These were the founders of that vast empire which has lasted to our own days, the great captains of the permanent warfare of soul against flesh, the heroic and immortal models offered to the religious of all ages. Their miraculous conversions, their poverty, literally evangelical, their labours, their prodigious austerities, and their miracles, have been bequeathed to posterity in immortal lines by the eloquence of St. Athanasius, St. Jerome, and St. Ephrem.

In a book exclusively devoted to the monks of the West, even the merest sketch of the monastic history of the East ought not to be expected. Besides, who has not read the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert?*[1] Who is so ignorant or

[1] The last version of the precious collection, entitled *Vitæ Patrum, sive Historiæ Eremeticæ*, libri x., published by P. Herbert Rosweyde, Jesuit, at Antwerp, in 1628, is certainly one of the noblest of existing books, and well worthy of the illustrious monk who first conceived the plan of the *Acta Sanctorum*, which his brethren the Bollandists have carried out. He has collected in this folio all the biographies and authentic notices of the Fathers of the desert, dividing them into ten books. The first contains the lives of the principal patriarchs of the Thebaid, written by St. Jerome, St. Athanasius, St. Ephrem, and others; also those of the holy women of the same time—Eugenia, Euphrasia, Thaïs, Pelagia, &c. The second and third are the work of Ruffinus, priest of Aquileia, and companion of St. Melania in her pilgrimage to the East; they comprise biographical notices, less extended but more numerous than those of the first book. The fourth is composed of anecdotes extracted from the *Dialogues* of Sulpicius Severus, and from the *Institutes* and *Collations* of John Cassianus. The fifth, sixth, and seventh books—translations from the Greek by the Roman deacons Pelagius and John Paschasius—contain maxims and examples borrowed from the life of the Fathers, and arranged, according to their contents,

unfortunate as not to have devoured these narratives of the heroic age of monasticism? Who has not breathed with delight the perfume of these flowers of solitude? Who has not contemplated, if not with the eyes of faith, at least with the admiration which is inspired by an indisputable grandeur of soul, the struggles of these athletes of penitence, and even the marvellous histories of those lost women who, having in vain essayed to corrupt them, showed themselves worthy of imitating, and capable sometimes even of surpassing them, by prodigies of penitence and sanctity? The reader of these narratives cannot lay them down.[1] Everything is to be found there: variety, pathos, the epic sublimity and simplicity of a race of men artless as infants and strong as giants. They have made the Thebaid an immortal and popular name; they have reduced the enemies of truth to the homage of silence; and, even in our uncertain and debilitated age, they have found eloquent panegyrists among the most celebrated and sincere writers of our day.[2]

under the title of various virtues. The eighth, which bears the special name of *Historia Lausiaca*, is a collection addressed to the prefect Lausus by Palladius, afterwards bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia, who was in Egypt about 390, and spent three years in visiting the hermits; the narrative of all that he saw and heard there, forms one of the most precious portions of the collection. The ninth, which we owe to Theodoret, bishop of Cyr, is devoted to the holy hermits of Asia. The tenth, which is the work of a Greek monk of the sixth century, Jean Moschus, and bears the special title of *Pratum Spirituale*, or *Paradisus Novus*, is similar.—Of all existing French translations of the *Life of the Fathers*, the best is that of René Gautier, published in the early part of the seventeenth century, and strongly impressed with the charm and energy of the French of that period.

[1] When the literature of our century was in its most degraded condition, under the first empire, it is pleasing to find these words in a letter of the honest and courageous Ducis: "My dear friend, I am reading the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert:* I am dwelling with St. Pacome, founder of the monastery of Tabenne. Truly, there is a charm in transporting one's self to that land of the angels: one would not wish ever to come out of it."

[2] MM. de Chateaubriand, Villemain, St. Marc Girardin, Franz de Cham-

Though we scarcely cast a glance upon that glorious crowd, yet from the midst of it rises a figure so universally renowned, that we must pause to contemplate him. It is Anthony. Young, rich, and noble, at twenty years old he heard that text of the Gospel read in a church, "If thou wouldst be perfect," &c., and he applied it to himself. He sold his three hundred acres of rich land,[1] and, giving the price to the poor, plunged into the desert to seek God and His salvation there. There he lived at first alone, in a painful and incessant struggle against the cruel temptations of the devil and the flesh. At length he succeeded in overcoming the sensual ardour of his youth by fasting, macerations, and, above all, by prayer, "that prayer as long as the night," says Bossuet, which absorbed his nights so much as to make him dread the day. "Oh, sun!" he said at one time when that orb flooded him with its light, in the midst of his prayers, "wherefore dost thou rise already, and turn me from contemplating the splendour of the true light?" At thirty-five the battle was gained. In subduing his body, he attained freedom of soul.[2] He crossed the Nile, and went deeper still into the most unknown deserts. There he passed other twenty years in the ruins of an old castle. That long and happy solitude was disturbed by the disciples who gathered round him, by the neighbouring hermits who came to ask him the secrets of the knowledge of God. Pilgrims of all nations brought their infirmities

pagny, Albert de Broglie. We should add to these names that of the lamented Moehler, the most illustrious of modern German theologians. The second volume of his *Mélanges* contains a *History of the Origin and First Developments of the Monastic Order*, written in 1836. If he had continued this work, which extends only to a hundred pages and stops at the fifth century, another great work would have been added to Catholic literature, and it would only have remained to us to translate it.

[1] "Aruræ autem erant ei trecentæ uberes, et valde optimæ."—S. ATHAN., *Vit. S. Anton.*, c. 2. "The *arura* was a measure of superficies used in Egypt."—V. ROSWEYDE, *Onomasticon*, p. 1014.

[2] "Tantam animæ libertatem."—S. ATHAN., *Vit. S. Ant.*, c. 22.

to him to be cured, their consciences to be purified. The Neo-Platonic philosophers carried their doubts and objections to him, and found in him the subtile and vigorous defender, ingenious and eloquent, of Redemption.[1] They gathered and established themselves round him; they remained there to imitate and obey him; he became the father and head of all the anchorites of the Thebaid, whom he thus transformed into cenobites.[2] In governing them by his example and instructions, he substituted for an isolated existence the life in common, so necessary to break down pride, and to fortify, enlighten, and animate fervour. He guided them at once in the culture of the soul and in the labour of the hands, a double and incessant activity which was henceforward to fill their life. Anthony became the first of the abbots, and, like Abraham, the father of a great people which should have no end.

He issued from the desert only to combat paganism and heresy. He went to Alexandria, at first to encourage the Christians there, and to seek martyrdom for himself during the persecution of Maximin; he returned there at the head of an army of monks, to preach in the public haunts against the Arians, and bear witness to the divinity of Christ. He thus confronted at once two great enemies, pagan corruption and heresy. After having braved the imperial magistrates, dared their soldiers, and refuted their arguments, he well deserved to have for his guest, friend, disciple, and biographer, the immortal Athanasius, the great bishop and eloquent doctor, who, at the cost of so many sufferings, saved the true faith, and secured the triumph of the decrees of Nicæa. The Emperor Constantine and his sons wrote to Anthony humbly as to their father, recommending to him the destinies of the new Rome. He was proclaimed the bulwark of orthodoxy, the light of the world. The very sight of him excited popular enthusiasm everywhere; pagans,

[1] S. ATHAN., *Vit. S. Ant.*, c. 44-49.

[2] From *κοινὸς*, common, and *βιόω*, to live.

and even the priests of the idols, gathered round his path, crying, "Let us see the man of God."[1] But he hastened to return to his Thebaid. "The fish die," said he, "when they are drawn to land, and the monks lose their strength in towns; let us return quickly to our mountains, like fish to the water."[2] He completed his life there in the midst of an always increasing stream of disciples and pilgrims, who received his instructions in the Egyptian language, and who admired even the unalterable beauty of his features, which age did not destroy,[3] and especially his gaiety, his joyous and winning affability, infallible sign of a soul which soars into serene regions. He left to his brethren, in a memorable discourse, the narrative of his long battles with the devil, and at the same time the code of virtues and graces which are necessary to the solitary life.[4] Finally, he died more than a hundred years old, after having established by his example, and by his immense popularity, the influence and grandeur of the monastic life.

Near him stands Paul, who had preceded him by twenty years in the desert; Paul, the most illustrious and constant of anchorites, who is considered the founder of that eremetical life which the great Anthony adopted, transformed, and replaced by the cenobitic. Discovered by Anthony in his cavern, in the shade of the palm which furnished him with food and clothing, he offered to him that hospitality which history and poetry have vied[5] in celebrating, and died bequeathing to him that tunic of palm leaves, with which Anthony invested himself, on the solemn days of Easter and Pentecost, as with the armour of a hero dead in the arms of victory.

[1] "Precamur ut videamus hominem Dei: quia hoc apud universos conspicuum erat nomen Antonii."—S. ATHAN., *Vit. S. Ant.*, c. 42.

[2] "Ut pisces ad mare, ita nos ad montem festinemus."—*Ibid.*, c. 53.

[3] "Obstupuerunt universi cleri gratiam, quasi nihil temporis exegisset, antiquus membrorum decor perseveravit. Nihil asperum quotidiana cum hostibus bella contulerant. . . . Semper hilarem faciem gerens, jucundus atque affabilis."—*Ibid.*, c. 13, 40.

[4] *Ibid.*, c. 15–20.

[5] S. JEROME, *Vit. S. Pauli*; CHATEAUBRIAND, *Les Martyrs*, book xi.

Then comes Pacome, younger than St. Anthony by forty years, but dead before him. Born a pagan, a soldier under Constantine before he was a monk, he practised in solitude a discipline a hundred times more austere than that of camps; during fifteen years he never lay down, and slept only standing supported against a wall, or half-seated upon a stone bench, after days of the hardest labour, as a carpenter, a mason, or a cleanser of pits. He gave to the cenobites, whom Anthony had governed by his oral instruction and example, a written rule complete and minute, the very words of which had been brought to him from heaven by an angel.[1] He founded upon the Nile, at Tabenne,[2] in the higher Thebaid, the first monastery properly so called, or rather a congregation of eight monasteries,[3] each governed by an abbot, but united by a close tie, and placed under the same general superior. These were filled by many thousands of monks; and when Athanasius, already celebrated for his zeal against Arianism, and his glorious struggles with the Emperor Constantius, came from Alexandria and went up the Nile to visit, as far as the higher Thebaid, these numerous communities whose fidelity appeared to him the principal bulwark of orthodoxy, Pacome led an immense army of monks, his own presence among whom he in humility concealed, to meet the stranger, all chanting hymns, and burning with the spirit which should vanquish and bury all

[1] *Vit. S. Pachomii*, c. 21. The text of this rule is to be found in the valuable collection entitled, LUCÆ HOLSTENII. *Vatic. Bibl. Præfect., Codex Regularum Monasticarum et Canonicarum*, &c., Aug. Vindel., 1769, fol.

[2] Tabenne was in the diocese of Tentyra (Denderah), a little above the first cataract.

[3] Every monastery of Tabenne was divided into several families, according to the manual labour which the monks pursued who composed the family; each family had its prior, and was subdivided into *cells*, containing each three monks. Several of these monasteries were composed of from thirty to forty families, each comprising forty monks: that made more than twelve hundred in each monastery. Others numbered only from two to three hundred.—MOEHLER, *l. c.*

the heresies. This was the first review of the new army of the Church.[1]

For his purpose was indeed to train soldiers, or, to speak more truly, athletes tried and invincible. Let us listen to the words which he desired every monk, in the evening, before lying down upon his bed, to address, in the name of his soul, to all the members of his body, apostrophising them one after another, in order that he might subdue them to be only pledges of obedience to the divine law, and weapons of warfare in the noble service of God.

"While we are still together, obey me, and serve the Lord with me, for the time approaches when you, my hands, shall no longer be able to thrust yourselves forth and seize the goods of others, nor to close yourselves to strike the victim of your wrath; the time when you, my feet, shall be no more able to run in the paths of iniquity. Before death separates us, and while this separation, brought upon us by the sin of the first man, remains unaccomplished, let us fight, let us persevere, let us struggle manfully, let us serve the Lord without torpor or idleness, till the day comes when He will wipe off our terrestrial sweats, and conduct us to an immortal kingdom. Weep, my eyes; and thou, my flesh, accomplish thy noble service: labour with me in prayer, lest the seeking for repose and sleep should end in perpetual torments: be vigilant, sober, laborious, that thou mayest merit the abundance of good things reserved for thee, and that eternity may not echo for ever that dismal lamentation of the soul to the body: Alas! alas! why was I ever attached to thee, and why should I suffer, because of thee, an eternal condemnation?"[2]

After Pacome, whom all agree to recognise as the first who brought monastic life to rule and order, came Ammon,

[1] "Ingens multitudo fratrum. . . . In monachorum turmis . . . inter monachorum agmina."—*Vit. S. Pachom.*, c. 27.

[2] "Cum vespere pervenitur ad stratum, singulis membris corporis sui dicat. Manibus, . . . veniet tempus . . . quando pugillus administrator iracundiæ non erit. . . . Pedibus, . . . certemus, fortiter, stemus perseveranter, viriliter dimicemus. . . . Fundite lacrymas oculi, demonstra

the friend of Anthony's youth, rich, like him, but in addition married. He lived for eighteen years with his wife as a sister, then retired into the desert, and was the first to found a community upon the celebrated mountain of Nitria, at the confines of Libya, where more than five thousand monks soon collected to form a sort of religious republic, where they might live in labour and liberty.[1] Among these was another Ammon, called to be the bishop of a neighbouring city, who cut off his right ear, in order to escape by that mutilation from the episcopate which would have been forced upon him.[2]

As there were two Ammons, there were also two Macarii; one, called the *Egyptian*, or the elder, who was first to establish himself in the vast desert of Scete, between Mount Nitria and the Nile; the other, called the *Alexandrine*, who, among so many penitents, distinguished himself by the incredible rigour of his austerities. To subdue the rebellion of his flesh, he obliged himself to remain six months in a marsh, and there exposed his body naked to the attacks of the gnats of Africa, whose sting can pierce even the wild boar's hide.[3] He also wrote a system of rules for the use of the solitaries who surrounded him, and whose rigorous abstinence is proved by the fate of a cluster of new grapes offered by a traveller to St. Macarius.[4] Despite his desire

caro nobilem tuam servitutem. . . . Et tunc audietur ululatus animæ defientis ad corpus: Heu me, quia colligata sum tibi, et propter te pœnam perpetuæ condemnationis excipio."—*Vit. S. Pachomii*, c. 46.

[1] "In eo habitant ad quinque millia virorum, qui utuntur vario vitæ genere, unusquisque ut potest et vult, adeo ut liceat et solum manere, et cum duobus aut tribus, et cum quo velit numero."—*Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 7. But a severe discipline corrected the abuse of this liberty. There is to be seen in the principal church of Mount Nitria, three whips or scourges to chastise on the spot monks, robbers, and strangers, who shall commit any crime: "Adeo ut quicumque delinquunt et convincuntur, palmam amplectantur et ergo plagas præfinitas accipiant et sic dimittantur."—*Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, c. 12.

[3] "In palude Scetes, in qua possunt culices vel sauciare pelles aprorum."—*Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 20.

[4] "Uvis recentibus perbellisque ad se missis."

to taste them, he gave them to one of his brethren who was at work, and who had also a great wish for them, but who offered them to another, who in his turn passed them to a third. The tempting cluster passed thus from hand to hand till it came back to the hands of Macarius, who gave thanks to God for that universal mortification, and threw the grapes far from him.

These two patriarchs of the western deserts of Egypt lived much together; they were exiled together by the Arians, who feared their zeal for orthodoxy. They crossed the Nile together in a ferry-boat, where they encountered two military tribunes, accompanied by a great array of horses with decorated bridles, of equipages, soldiers, and pages covered with ornaments. The officers looked long at the two monks in their old dresses, humbly seated in a corner of the bark. They might well look at them, for in that bark two worlds stood face to face: old Rome degraded by the emperors, and the new Christian republic, of which the monks were the precursors. As they approached the shore, one of the tribunes said to the cenobites, "You are happy, for you despise the world." "It is true," answered the Alexandrine, "we despise the world, whilst the world despises you; and you have spoken more truly than you intended; we are happy in fact and in name, for we are called Macarius, that is to say, happy (*μακάριος*)." The tribune made no answer; but, returning to his house, he renounced all his wealth and rank, and went to seek happiness in solitude.[1]

Thus the two Thebaids and all the deserts of Egypt were peopled. We see them at the end of the fourth century full of monks and monasteries, united among themselves from that period, like the modern orders and congregations,

[1] "Accidit ut maximum pontonem ingrederentur. . . . Duo tribuni cum magno fastu et apparatu . . . rhedam totam æneam . . . pueros torquibus et aureis zonis ornatos. . . . Beati estis vos qui mundum illuditis. . . . Nos autem mundumillusimus, vos autem illusit mundus."—*Hist. Lausiaca, loc. cit.*

by a common discipline, by reciprocal visits, and general assemblies.

Nothing in the wonderful history of these hermits of Egypt is so incredible as their number. But the most weighty authorities agreed in establishing it.[1] It was a kind of emigration of towns to the desert, of civilisation to simplicity, of noise to silence, of corruption to innocence. The current once begun, floods of men, of women, and of children threw themselves into it, and flowed thither during a century with irresistible force. Let us quote some figures. Pacome, who died at fifty-six, reckoned three thousand monks under his rule; his monasteries of Tabenne soon included seven thousand, and St. Jerome affirms that as many as fifty thousand were present at the annual gathering of the general congregation of monasteries which followed his rule.[2]

There were, as we have just said, five thousand on the mountain of Nitria alone. Nothing was more frequent than to see two hundred, three hundred, or five hundred monks under the same abbot. Near Arsinoe (now Suez), the abbot Serapion governed ten thousand, who in the harvest-time spread themselves over the country to cut the corn, and thus gained the means of living and giving alms.[3] It has even been asserted that there were in Egypt as many monks in the deserts as inhabitants in the towns.[4] The towns themselves were, so to speak, inundated by them, since in 356 a traveller found in the single town of Oxyrynchus[5] upon the Nile, ten thousand monks and twenty thousand virgins consecrated to God.[6]

The immense majority of these religious were cenobites —that is to say, they lived in the same enclosure, and were

[1] S. AUGUSTIN, *De Morib. Eccles.*, i. 31.
[2] *Præf. in Regul. S. Pachom.*, ap. HOLSTEIN, i. 25.
[3] RUFFIN., *De Vit. Patr.*, lib. ii. c. 18.
[4] *Ibid.*, ii. 7.
[5] Now *Abou-Girge*, according to the map of Father Sicard.
[6] RUFFIN., ii. 5.

united by common rule and practice under an elected head, whom they everywhere called abbot, from the Syriac word *abba*, which means *father*. The cenobitical life superseded, rapidly and almost completely, the life of anchorites. Many anchorites, to make their salvation more sure, returned into social monastic life. Scarcely any man became an anchorite until after having been a cenobite, and in order to meditate before God during the last years of his life.[1] Custom has therefore given the title of monks to cenobites alone.

Ambitious at once of reducing to subjection their rebellious flesh, and of penetrating the secrets of the celestial light, these cenobites from that time united active with contemplative life. The various and incessant labours which filled up their days are known. In the great frescoes of the Campo-Santo at Pisa, where some of the fathers of Christian art, Orcagna, Laurati, Benozzo Gozzoli, have set before us the life of the fathers of the desert in lines so grand and pure, they appear in their coarse black or brown dresses, a cowl upon their heads, sometimes a mantle of goatskin upon their shoulders, occupied in digging up the soil, in cutting down trees, in fishing in the Nile, in milking the goats, in gathering the dates which served them for food, in plaiting the mats on which they were to die. Others are absorbed in reading or meditating on the Holy Scriptures. Thus a saint has said, the cells united in the desert were like a hive of bees. There each had in his hands the wax of labour, and in his mouth the honey of psalms and prayers.[2] The days were divided between prayer and work. The work was divided between field-labour and the exercise of various trades, especially the manufacture of those mats which are still so universally used in southern countries.

[1] "A new convert having shut himself up in an absolute solitude immediately after having assumed the monastic dress, the elders of the place (*vicini seniores*) forced him to come out of it, and sent him to do penance in all the neighbouring cells."—*De Vit. Patr.*, lib. v. c. 10, n. 110.

[2] EPIPHAN., lib. iii. *Hær.* 80 *contra Massalianos*, ap. ROSWEYDE.

There were also among these monks entire families of weavers, of carpenters, of curriers, of tailors, and of fullers:[1] among all, the labour was doubled by the rigour of an almost continual fast. All the rules of the patriarchs of the desert made labour obligatory, and the example of these holy lives gave authority to the rule. No exception to the contrary can be quoted, or has been discovered. The superiors were first in hardship. When the elder Macarius came to visit the great Anthony, they immediately set to work at their mats together, conferring thus upon things important to souls; and Anthony was so edified by the zeal of his guest that he kissed his hands, saying, "What virtues proceed from these hands!"[2]

Each monastery was then a great school of labour, and at the same time a great school of charity.[3] They practised this charity not only among themselves, and with regard to the poor inhabitants of the neighbouring countries, but especially in the case of travellers whom the necessities of commerce or public business called to the banks of the Nile, and of the numerous pilgrims whom their increasing fame drew to the desert. A more generous hospitality had never been exercised, nor had the universal mercy introduced by Christianity into the world blossomed anywhere to such an extent.[4] A thousand incidents in their history reveal the most tender solicitude for the miseries of the poor. Their extraordinary fasts, their cruel macerations, that heroic penitence which was the heart of their life, did not destroy their perception of the weakness and necessities of others. On

[1] S. HIERON., *Præf. in Reg. S. Pachomii*, § 6. Compare *Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 39.

[2] "Sedentes a sero et colloquentes de utilitate animarum. Multa virtus de istis egreditur."—ROSWEYDE, *De Vit. Patrum*, p. 585. Compare S. HIERON., *in Vit. S. Hilarion.*

[3] CHAMPAGNY, *loc. cit.*

[4] "Nusquam sic vidimus florere charitatem, nusquam sic opus servare misericordiæ et studium hospitalitatis impleri."—RUFFIN., *De Vit. Patr.*, lib. ii. c. 21.

the contrary, they had learned the secret principle of the love of their neighbour in that daily struggle against the sensual ardour of their youth, against the perpetually renewed rebellion of the flesh, against the recollections and temptations of the world. The *Xenodochium*—that is, the asylum of the poor and strangers—formed from that time a necessary appendix to every monastery. The most ingenious combinations, and the most gracious inspirations of charity, are to be found in their history. A certain monastery served as an hospital for sick children, and thus anticipated one of the most touching creations of modern benevolence;[1] and another was transformed by its founder, who had been a lapidary in his youth, into an hospital for lepers and cripples. "Behold," said he, in showing to the ladies of Alexandria the upper floor, which was reserved for women—"behold my jacinths;" then, in conducting them to the floor below, where the men were placed—"See my emeralds."[2]

They were hard only upon themselves. They exercised this hardness with that imperturbable confidence which gives the victory; and this victory they won, complete and immortal, in the most unfavourable conditions. Under a burning sky, in a climate which has always seemed the cause or the excuse of vice, in a country given up at all times to every kind of laxness and depravity, there were thousands of men who, during two centuries, interdicted themselves from the very shadow of a sensual gratification, and made of the most rigorous mortification a rule as universal as a second nature.[3]

To labours simply manual, to the most austere exercises of penitence, and the cares of hospitality and charity, they

[1] ROSWEYDE, p. 357.

[2] "Erat autem is a juventute lapidarius, . . . quid vis primum videre hyacinthos an smaragdos? . . . Ecce hyacinthi . . . Ecce smaragdi."—*Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 6.

[3] BALMES, *Du Protestantisme Comparé au Catholicisme*, t. ii. c. 39.

united the culture of the mind and the study of sacred literature. There were at Tabenne a special family of *literati* who knew Greek. The rule of St. Pacome made the reading of divers portions of the Bible a strict obligation. All the monks, besides, were required to be able to read and write. To qualify themselves for reading the Scriptures was the first duty imposed upon the novices.[1]

Amongst them were many learned men and philosophers, trained in the ancient knowledge of the schools of Alexandria, and who must have carried to the desert a treasure of varied learning. Solitude instructed them how to purify their gifts in the crucible of faith. It doubled the strength of their mind. The new science, theology, found scholars nowhere more profound, deeply convinced, and eloquent.[2] They therefore feared no discussion with their old companions of study or of pleasure; and when they had refuted and confounded the heretical sophists, they opened their arms and their hearts with joy to receive the bishops and orthodox confessors who came to seek a shelter with them.

It is not, then, wonderful if the hero of those great conflicts of faith against tyranny and heresy, the great Athanasius, wandering from trial to trial, and from exile to exile, especially loved to seek an asylum in the cells of the cenobites of the Thebaid, to share their studies and their austerities, to collect the narrative of their struggle with the flesh and the devil, and to renew his courage and his soul in the refreshing waves of monastic prayer and penitence. He had always counted upon the sympathy of the monks, and always seconded with all his might the progress of their order. He could then regard himself as at home among

[1] "Omnino nullus erit in monasterio qui non discat litteras et de Scripturis aliquid teneat."

[2] "Scripturarum vero divinarum meditationis et intellectus atque scientiæ divinæ nusquam tanta vidimus exercitia, ut singulos pene eorum oratores credas in divina esse sapientia."—RUFFIN., *ubi supra*.

"those houses vowed to prayer and silence, rising from stage to stage along the Nile, the last of which lose themselves in solitude, like the source of the stream."[1] In vain his persecutors searched for him there; at the first signal of their approach he passed unperceived from one monastery to another, and there took up the course of life of an ordinary monk, as assiduous as any in the offices and regular labour. He ended always by taking refuge in an unknown cavern to which one faithful person alone knew the road. His retirement in the desert lasted six years. His genius could but increase there, his eloquence took a more masculine and incisive character. It was from thence that he wrote to the bishops of Egypt to enlighten them, to his church in Alexandria to console it, and to the persecutors and heretics to confound them. It was to his hosts of the Thebaid, as to the witnesses and soldiers of orthodoxy, that he addressed the famous *Epistle to the Solitaries*, which contains so dramatic and complete a narration of the Arian persecution under Constantius. It is entitled, "To all those who lead, no matter where, the monastic life, and who, strengthened in faith, have said, 'Behold we have forsaken all and followed Thee.'"[2] In this he sets forth an apologetic account of his life and doctrines, he relates his sufferings and those of the faithful, he proclaims and justifies the divinity of the Word, he stigmatises the courtier bishops of Cæsar, docile instruments of those vile eunuchs who disposed of the empire and the Church as masters; he accuses the Emperor Constantius

[1] ALBERT DE BROGLIE, *L'Eglise et l'Empire Romain au* IV^e *Siècle*, t. iii. p. 331.—If it had entered into our plan to enlarge upon this episode of Athanasius in the desert, we should have given it up, believing that all our readers have certainly read the excellent narrative of the Prince de Broglie, who has treated in a masterly manner all that concerns the career of this great man. The animosity of the criticism to which his admirable work has been subjected will excite the indignation of all right-thinking minds; but full justice will be done to him in reading it.

[2] "Omnibus ubique monasticam vitam agentibus, et fide firmatis, et dicentibus, Ecce nos reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te."

of having deprived all the churches of freedom, and having filled everything with hypocrisy and impiety; he claims for truth the noble privilege of conquering by freedom, and throws back upon error and falsehood the necessity of taking constraint and persecution for their weapons. Let us quote his noble words, immortally true, and always in season—"If it is disgraceful for some bishops to have changed in fear, it is still more disgraceful to have done violence to them, and nothing marks more clearly the weakness of an evil cause. The devil, who has no truth, comes with axe and hatchet to break down the doors of those who receive him; but the Saviour is so gentle that He contents Himself with teaching, and when He comes to each of us, He does no violence, but He knocks at the door and says, Open to Me, My sister, My spouse. If we open to Him, He enters; if we will not, He withdraws; for truth is not preached with swords or arrows, nor by soldiers, but by counsel and persuasion. It belongs to the true religion never to constrain, but to persuade."[1]

Inspired by such teachings and by such an example, the monks, when the satellites of the persecutors pursued the orthodox confessors even into the desert, scorned to answer them, presented their throats to the sword, and suffered tortures and death with joy, holding it more meritorious to suffer for the defence of their legitimate pastors, than to fast, or to practise any other austerity.[2] They themselves went forth, when it was necessary, from their Thebaid, to

[1] "Hominum suæ sententiæ diffidentium est vim inferre ac invitos cogere. Sic diabolus, cum nihil veri habeat, in securi et ascia irruens confringit portas eorum qui se recipiunt: Salvator autem ea est mansuetudine, ut his verbis doceat quidem: 'Si quis vult post me venire;' et, 'Qui vult meus esse discipulus.' Sed ubi quempiam aderit, nullam inferat vim, sed potius pulsando hæc loquatur: 'Aperi mihi, soror mea, sponsa.' Tunc, si aperiant, ingreditur; sin negligant abnuantque, secedit. Non enim gladiis aut telis, non militum manu, veritas prædicatur, sed suasione et consilio. Religionis proprium est non cogere, sed persuadere."—S. ATHANAS., *Ad Solitarios*, ed. Bened., pp. 363, 368.

[2] S. ATHANAS., Ep. 2, *ap. Oper. Luciferi Cagliar.*

go to Alexandria, to snatch their last victims from the last persecutors, and confound by their courage, by their abrupt and penetrating language, and even by their presence alone, the most widely spread and dreaded of heresies.

But, however great and strong their influence might be in polemics, and in the midst of a population agitated by these struggles, it was more powerful still in their proper sphere, in that solitude to which they always returned like Anthony, their model and master, with so much alacrity and joy.

It was in the desert especially that their triumph shone, and that the world, scarcely yet Christian, recognised in them the envoys of heaven and the conquerors of the flesh. When towards evening, at the hour of vespers, after a day of stifling heat, all work ceased, and from the midst of the sands, from the depths of caverns, from hypogeums, from pagan temples cleared of their idols, and from all the vast tombs of a people dead, the cry of a living people rose to heaven; when everywhere and all at once the air echoed the hymns, the prayers, the songs pious and solemn, tender and joyous, of these champions of the soul and conquerors of the desert, who celebrated in the language of David the praises of the living God, the thanksgivings of the freed soul, and the homage of vanquished nature,—then the traveller, the pilgrim, and especially the new convert, stood still, lost in emotion, and, transported with the sounds of that sublime concert, cried aloud, "Behold, this is Paradise!"[1]

"Go," said the most eloquent doctor of the Church at that period—"go to the Thebaid; you shall find there a solitude still more beautiful than Paradise, a thousand choirs of angels under the human form, nations of martyrs,

[1] "Circa horam itidem nonam licet stare et audire in unoquoque monasterio hymnos et psalmos Christo canentes . . . adeo ut existimet quispiam se sublime elatum transmigrasse in paridisum deliciarum."—PALLAD., *Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 7.

armies of virgins, the diabolical tyrant chained, and Christ triumphant and glorified."[1]

The holy doctor spoke of armies of virgins, because in all times Christian women had shown themselves, both in number and zeal, the emulators of men in the practice of monastic virtues and austerities. Virginity had been honoured and practised in the Church from its origin.[2] Besides the sublime maids who bore it triumphant through the last agonies, there were a multitude who preserved it for many years in the midst of the world. For there were nuns, as there had been ascetics and hermits, before the regular and popular institution of monastic life. With all the more reason, when the towns and deserts of Egypt became populated with monasteries, the sex whose weakness Christianity had ennobled and purified, came there to claim its part. The most illustrious fathers of the desert found each in his own family a woman eager to comprehend and imitate him. The sisters of Anthony and Pacome, the mother of Theodore, the wife of Ammon, followed them into the desert, either to lead them back, or watch over them. These hearts, steeled by an immortal love, repelled them with unyielding resolution; then the sorrowing Christian women avenged themselves by embracing the same kind of life which raised their fears for their brothers. They established themselves in an enclosure, distinct but near, sometimes separated by a river or by a precipice from those whom they had followed. It was impossible to refuse to them counsels, rules, and precepts, which they observed with an ardent fidelity; and soon a multitude crowded into these sanctuaries to practise fasting, silence, austerities, and works of mercy.

There dwelt first, and above all, the heroic virgins who

[1] S. JOAN. CHRYSOST., *in Matth.*, hom. viii.

[2] See, among other proofs, S. CYPRIAN. MARTYR., *Tract. de Habitu Virginum*, where he speaks of those who "se Christo dicaverunt, se Deo voverunt."

brought to that shelter their innocence, their attractions, and their love of heaven. Of these all ranks and all countries furnished their contingent by thousands. They hesitated at no sacrifice to procure an entrance there, nor before any trial to be permitted to remain.

Here, it was the slave Alexandra who, fearing her own beauty, and in pity for the poor soul of him who loved her, buried herself alive in an empty tomb, and remained ten years without permitting any one to see her face.[1]

There, it was the beautiful and learned Euphrosyne who, at eighteen, deserted her father and her husband; and, to escape the better from their search, obtained admission, by concealing her sex, into a monastery of monks, where she remained thirty-eight years without leaving her cell. Her father, in despair, after useless search by land and sea, came to the same monastery to seek some comfort to his increasing grief. "My father," he said to the first monk whom he met, "pray for me; I can bear up no longer, so much do I weep for my lost daughter, so much am I devoured by this grief!" And it was to herself he spoke, to his daughter, whom he did not recognise in the monk's dress. At sight of the father from whom she had fled, and whom she too well recognised, she grew pale and wept. But soon, smothering her tears, she consoled him, cheered him up, promised that he should one day see his daughter again, and thus encouraged him for his further life; then finally, when she felt herself dying, she sent for him to her bedside, revealed the secret of her sacrifice, and bequeathed to him her example and her cell, where her father, so long inconsolable, came to live and die in his turn.[2]

[1] "Quidam insano mei amore tenebatur, et, ne eum viderer molestia afficere . . . malui me vivam in hoc monumentum inferre, quam offendere animam quæ facta est ad Dei imaginem."—*De Vit. Patr.*, lib. viii. c. 5.

[2] "Ora pro me, pater, quia non possum sufferre dolorem de filia mea, sed magis ac magis de die in diem . . . crescit vulnus meum. Ut autem non agnosceretur per multa colloquia, dixit ad Paphnutium: Vale, Domine

But more strange recruits for these sanctuaries of virginity were the celebrated courtesans, the dancers, the mercenary and imperious beauties whom Egypt, and especially Alexandria, seemed then to produce in greater number and more perfidious and undaunted than elsewhere, as if to subject Christian virtue to a war still more dangerous than the persecution out of which it had come. Men and demons excited them violently against the solitaries. It was not enough for these female conquerors to seduce, to dazzle, and to govern the profane lay crowd of their adorers of every age and condition; they longed to vanquish and enchain the strong and pure men who believed themselves safe in the shelter of their retreats. Their pride could not be satisfied without this triumph. They hastened into the desert; they knocked at the doors of the cells, they displayed to the eyes of the suppliant and dismayed solitaries those attractions which had been too often found irresistible, and that pomp with which the East has always adorned voluptuousness; they employed in that effort all the audacity, the address, and the charms which they possessed, and yet almost always they were overcome. They returned vanquished to Alexandria, and went to hide their defeat in a monastery; or they remained in solitude to throw themselves, after the example of their victors, into the depths of repentance and divine love.

The first place in the sacred annals of the desert seems to belong to those true martyrs of penitence, those glorious rivals of the Magdalene, the first friend of Christ, to Mary of Egypt, to Thais, to Pelagia, the celebrated actress of Antioch, to all those saints to whom the worship of the Christian nations has so long remained faithful. The saints who have written the lives of the fathers have related the

mi, . . . et anima illius compatiebatur illi, facies ejus pallebat et replebatur lacrymis."—ROSWEYDE, p. 366. The history of St. Eugenia, which immediately precedes that of St. Euphrosyne, has very great beauties, but also so many chronological difficulties, that I could not avail myself of it.

history of these courtesans, as they are called, with a bold simplicity which I should not venture to reproduce. A burning breath seems to pass across the narrative, which for an instant inflames their imagination, and is then extinguished in the pure and serene atmosphere of Christian chastity. "We were," says one of them, "seated at the feet of our bishop, that austere and vigorous monk, from the monastery of Tabenne. We were listening to and admiring his holy and salutary instructions; suddenly there appeared before us the first of the *mimes*, the most beautiful of the dancers of Antioch, all covered with jewels; her naked limbs were concealed under pearls and gold; she had her head and her shoulders bare. A great retinue accompanied her. The men of the world were never tired of devouring her charms with their eyes; a delicious perfume exhaled from all her person and sweetened the air we breathed. When she had passed, our father, who had long gazed at her, said to us, 'Have you not been charmed with so much beauty?' And we were all silent. 'For me,' resumed the bishop, 'I took great pleasure in it, for God has destined her to judge us, one day. . . . I see her,' he said later, 'like a dove all black and stained; but that dove shall be bathed in the waters of baptism, and shall fly towards heaven white as snow.' Shortly, in fact, she returned to be exorcised and baptized. 'I am called Pelagia,' she said, 'the name which my parents gave me; but the people of Antioch call me the *Pearl*, because of the quantity of ornaments with which my sins have adorned me.' Two days after, she gave all her goods to the poor, clothed herself in haircloth, and went to shut herself up in a cell on the Mount of Olives. Four years later, he who had admired her incomparable beauty so much, found her in that cell and did not recognise her, so much had penitence and fasting changed her. Her great eyes were hollow and sunken as in wells. She died thus. Such was," says the narrator, "the life of that courtesan, of that

hopeless one. God grant that we may find mercy like her at the day of judgment!"[1]

A different narrative, a type of innocent vocations, and the first detailed and authentic example of those contests between the cloister and the family, which have been renewed during so many centuries for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, is, however, more worthy of being quoted from these precious annals.

Euphrasia was the only daughter of a senator, nearly related to the Emperor Theodosius; her father having died while she was still a child, she was betrothed to a wealthy noble, and in the interval, before she came to marriageable years, her mother took her to Constantinople and Egypt, to visit the immense estates which they possessed there, and which extended into the higher Thebaid. They often lodged in a monastery of nuns of extreme austerity, and both conceived a great regard for these virgins, whose prayers for the soul of her husband and the future of her daughter the young widow incessantly craved. One day the abbess said to the little Euphrasia, "Do you love our house and our sisters?" "Yes," answered the child, "I love you." "But which do you love best, your betrothed or us?" "I do not know him any more than he knows me; I know you and love you; but you, which do you love best, your betrothed or me?" The abbess and the other nuns who were there answered, "We love thee, thee and our Christ." "Ah," said the child, "I also love you, you and your Christ." However, the mother, who had been present during this

[1] "Vir mirificus et efficacissimus monachus. . . . Ecce subito transiit per nos prima mimarum Antiochiæ, . . . prima choreutriarum pantomimarum. . . . Pulchritudinis autem decoris ejus non erat satietas omnibus secularibus hominibus. . . . Non delectati estis tanta pulchritudine ejus? . . . Naturali nomine Pelagia vocata sum, . . . cives vero Antiochiæ Margaritam me vocant, propter pondus ornamentorum quibus me adornaverunt peccata mea. Ego vero non cognovi eam . . . quam antea videram inæstimabili pulchritudine. . . . Oculi ejus sicut fossæ."—JACOB. DIAC., *Vit. S. Pelag.*, c. 2, 8, 14.

conversation, began to lament and weep, and would have led her daughter away. The abbess said to her, "You must go away, for those only who are vowed to Christ remain here." The child answered, "Where is He, this Christ?" The abbess showed her an image of the Saviour. She threw herself upon it, kissed it, and immediately said, "Well! I devote myself truly to my Christ; I shall go away no more with my mother, I will remain with you." The mother tried in vain with many caresses to induce her child to go with her; the abbess joined her persuasions to those of the mother. "If you remain here," she said, "you will have to learn the holy books and all the psalter, and fast every day till evening as the other sisters do." "I learn already to do all that," answered the girl, "only let me remain here." Then the abbess said to the mother, "Madame, she must be left to us; the grace of God shines on her; the virtue of her father and the prayers of both will procure her eternal life." The mother, conducting her daughter before the image of Christ, exclaimed, weeping, "Lord Jesus Christ, be gracious to this dear little girl, who seeks Thee, and who has given herself to Thee." She was then clothed in the monastic dress. Her mother said to her, "Lovest thou that dress?" "Yes, certainly, my mother; for I have learned that it is the robe of betrothal which the Lord gives to those who love Him." "May thy bridegroom then render thee worthy of Him!"[1]

These were the last words of the desolate mother, who embraced her daughter and went away beating her breast. She died soon after, leaving the young Euphrasia sole heir

[1] "Filia mea, habemus in Ægypto copiosam magnamque substantiam. . . . Neque illum novi, neque ille me: vos autem novi et vos amo. . . . Ego vero et vos diligo, et Christum meum. . . . Vere et ego me voveo Christo meo, et ulterius cum domina mea matre non vado. . . . Ubi vos manetis et ego maneo. . . . Litteras habes discere et psalterium, sicut universæ sorores. . . . Ego et jejunium et omnia disco. . . . Cui desponsata es, ipse faciat te thalamo suo dignam. . . . Et defiens pectusque suum tundens." —*De Vitis Patrum*, i. 352.

of a double and immense patrimony. At the solicitation of the nobleman who was to have married her, the emperor wrote to her to return to Constantinople. She answered him that she had already a bridegroom, and supplicated him, in the name of the close friendship which had united him to her father, to dispose of all her fortune for the advantage of the poor, of orphans, and of churches, to free and portion her slaves, to remit all their taxes to the cultivators of her paternal domains, and, finally, to intercede for her with the empress. In reading the letter, the empress said to her husband, "Truly this girl is of imperial race." The will of the young heiress was executed. She remained divested of everything in her Egyptian monastery; she lived there from the age of twelve to thirty, occupied with the hardest labours, cleaning out the chambers of the sisters, carrying wood and water to the kitchen, and even stones for the buildings, baking the bread in the great oven of the community, and attending to the sick children and the poor idiots who were brought to the nuns, as to the source of all remedies. All these merits did not preserve her from the trials, assaults, and calumnies which are the portion of the saints, and which pursued her even up to the day when she was laid in the tomb, where her mother awaited her coming.[1]

Let us haste to close the volume which contains these too-absorbing tales, and pursue our rapid course across the first ages of monastic glory, which the following ages only extended and increased.

Meantime, Egypt being speedily occupied, the stream of

[1] "Quapropter, imperator Domine, non ulterius vos ille vir fatiget. . . . Novi quia recordaberis parentum meorum, maxime patris mei. Audivi enim quia in palatio nunquam a te dividebatur. Omnes constitutos sub jugo servitutis manumitte et eis legitima concede. Manda actoribus patris mei ut omne debitum dimittant agricolis, quod a die patris mei usque ad hanc diem reddebant. . . . Vere, Domine imperator, filia est Antigoni et Euphrasiæ genus tuum, et ex sanguine ejus est hæc puella."—*De Vitis Patrum*, i. 355.

monastic life overflowed and inundated the neighbouring countries. The monks passed on to people the burning deserts of Arabia, Syria, and Palestine. Sinai was occupied by them almost as soon as the Thebaid. At the commencement of the fourth century, while the last pagan emperors were exhausting their rage against Christians throughout all the empire, the Arabs—who did not recognise their laws, but whom the instinct of evil associated with them in their war against Christ—murdered forty solitaries who had fixed their sojourn upon the holy mountain where God gave His law to Moses. Others came to replace them, and there came also other Arabs or Saracens to sacrifice their successors, and these alternations between the pacific colonisation of the monks and the bloody incursions of the Saracens, were prolonged during the rest of the century. But the destroyers tired sooner than the monks, and ended by becoming converts, a portion of them at least. St. Nilus was the principal apostle of these savage tribes, and the great monastic coloniser of Mount Sinai.

In Palestine monastic life was introduced by Hilarion. This young pagan, born at Gaza, having gone to study at Alexandria, where he was converted to Christianity, was drawn by the renown of Anthony into the desert. "Thou art welcome," said Anthony, seeing him approach his mountain—"thou art welcome, thou who shinest early as the star of morning." The young Syrian answered him, "Peace be with thee, thou column of light which sustains the universe."[1] He passed two months with the patriarch of the Cenobites, made up his mind to be a monk like Anthony, and to imitate him returned to his own country, where nothing of the kind had yet been seen. After having given all his goods to the poor, he established himself at sixteen upon the side of a mountain in a cabin of rushes, near a cistern which he had dug with his own hands, and which served to water the

[1] "Bene venisti, Lucifer, qui mane oriris. . . . Pax tibi, columna lucis, quæ sustines orbem universum."—*Vitæ Patrum*, i. § xvii. c. 4.

garden which produced his food. There he delved, sang, prayed, fasted, plaited baskets, and, above all, strove against the temptations of the devil. In vain the recollections of the beautiful women of Alexandria, of the sumptuous repasts, and all the seductions of the pagan world, came to arouse his senses. He undertook to reduce his body, like a beast of burden, by hunger and thirst, and succeeded thus in subduing his passions.[1] He passed twenty-two years in solitude; but that austere virtue in so young a man, and the miraculous cures obtained by his prayers, gradually extended his fame throughout all Syria; that fame attracted the crowd; that crowd gave him disciples and emulators; to receive them he had to form communities: and there is no doubt that the foundation of the monasteries which have risen from that time at Jerusalem and Bethlehem,[2] as if to approach the new institution to the places consecrated for ever by the Nativity and Passion of its divine model, date back to his labours. He had the honour of undergoing persecution under Julian the Apostate, and of being proscribed at the desire of his own compatriots of Gaza. But that trial was short, and it was much less proscription than the desire to escape his too great fame which conducted him into the Mediterranean isles, into Sicily, the Cyclades, and even into the isle of Cyprus. From country to country, and even beyond the sea, he fled from the fame of his virtues and miracles which pursued him.[3]

The island of Cyprus, so celebrated by the worship of Venus, and the associations of which made it the sanctuary

[1] "Nec quisquam monachum ante S. Hilarionem in Syria noverat. Orans et psallens et rostro humum fodiens, ut jejuniorum laborem labor operis duplicaret; simulque fiscellas junco texens."—S. HIERON., *Vit. S. Hilarion.*, c. 93. "Quoties illi nudæ mulieres cubitanti, quoties esurienti largissimæ apparuere dapes. . . . Ego te, aselle, faciam ut non calcitres, nec te hordeo alam, sed paleis; fame te conficiam et siti, gravi onerabo pondere, per æstus indagabo et frigora, ut cibum potius quam lasciviam cogites."—*Ibid.*

[2] BULTEAU, *Histoire Monastique d'Orient*, pp. 239, 268, 270.

[3] FÉNÉLON; ALBERT DE BROGLIE, *L'Eglise et l'Empire*, iv. 273.

of pagan sensualism, had the singular grace of being purified by a ray of monastic light, before becoming the last asylum of that Catholic royalty which the Crusades were to inaugurate near the tomb of Jesus Christ. Nothing can better depict the victory of the divine Son of the Virgin over the goddess mother of Love, than the sojourn of Hilarion at Paphos. The austere monk, whose youth had been but one long and triumphant struggle against voluptuousness, remained two years at the gates of that town, so dear to erotic poetry, whilst the Christians of the island crowded round him, and brought the possessed to him to be healed. He afterwards found a retreat more solitary, near the ruins of an ancient temple, doubtless consecrated to Venus, where he heard night and day the bellowing voices of a whole army of demons, impatient of the yoke which the soldier of chastity and prayer came to impose upon their ancient subjects. These nocturnal clamours rejoiced him greatly, for he loved, he said, to see his enemies face to face.[1]

There he died, an octogenarian, epitomising his life in these well-known words—"Go forth, then, my soul, go forth: what hast thou to fear? For nearly threescore and ten years thou hast served Christ, and dost thou fear to die?"[2]

Even to this day the Cypriote people, confusing in their recollections the legends of good and evil, the victories of the soul and the triumphs of sense, give to the ruins of one of the strong castles built by the Lusignans, which command their island, the double name of Castle of St. Hilarion, and the *Castle of the god of love.*

[1] "Ingressus Paphum, urbem Cypri, nobilem carminibus poetarum. . . . Antiquissimi templi ruina ex quo (ut ipse referebat et ejus discipuli testantur) tam innumerabilium per noctes et dies dæmonum voces resonabant, ut exercitum crederes. Quo ille valde delectatus, quod scilicet antagonistas haberet in promixo."—S. HIERON., *Vit. S. Hilarion.*, i. c. 35, 36.

[2] "Egredere: quid times? Egredere: anima mea, quid dubitas? Septuaginta prope annis servisti Christo, et mortem times?"—S. HIERON., *Vit. S. Hilarion.*, i. c. 35, 36.

Hilarion left upon the metropolitan see of the island, sanctified from henceforth by his presence and memory, an illustrious monk, St. Epiphanius, who had been his disciple, and who had come to rejoin him at Paphos. A Jew by origin —converted in his youth by seeing the charity of a monk, who divested himself of his own garment to clothe a poor man—Epiphanius himself became a monk, and had acquired great fame for his austerity, in Palestine first, where Hilarion had trained him, and afterwards in Egypt, where he lived during the persecution of Julian, and where Christianity kept its ground better than in the other quarters of the East, thanks to the authority of Athanasius and the influence of the Thebaid. Raised in spite of himself to the episcopate, he continued to wear the dress of a hermit, and it was at the request of the superiors of two Syrian monasteries that he wrote the history and refutation of the eighty heresies then known. He was the friend of St. Basil, St. Jerome, and St. Chrysostom. He knew Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, and Latin, equally well: he always devoted this knowledge to the defence of orthodoxy in faith and discipline, which he served by his works not less than by his journeys to Rome, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. He was born in a cool valley, at the foot of Mount Olympus, and not far from Cape *Pifani*, which still retains the trace of his name in that alteration made by European sailors of the word *Epiphanios*.[1]

The Emperor Julian, whose mind was greater than his heart, was not unaware of the grandeur of the monastic institution, and, even in persecuting the monks, dreamt of male and female convents for his regenerated pagans. It was desiring the resuscitation of a corpse. The work of God needed no emperor: the saints were sufficient for it. The monastic life which they produced, and in which they

[1] St. Hilarion and St. Epiphanius are both objects of popular veneration to the modern Cypriotes: as M. de Mas-Latrie, who of all contemporary writers has best studied the history and monuments of that interesting island, proves.

perfected their title to heaven, propagated itself rapidly, and thanks to this, the conversion of the East to Christianity was being accomplished. At Edessa in the centre of Mesopotamia, St. Ephrem carried to this work the authority of his long career, of his poetic and popular eloquence, of his austere genius, and of his noble combats against the shameless corruption [1] which infected that oriental civilisation, from which it was necessary to separate truth and the future.

Edessa was then the metropolis of those Syriac populations which had preserved their language and national spirit in the shelter of Greek influence. Ephrem was at once their apostle, their doctor, their orator, and their poet. He translated the dogmas proclaimed at Nicæa, and the events of holy and evangelical history, into popular songs which might be heard many centuries after, in the plains of Syria. Becoming a monk at the same time as he became a Christian, he continued to his last day to instruct the monks his brethren and the people of Edessa. His eloquence was nervous and full of fire and unction. "The Holy Spirit," says St. Gregory of Nysse, "gave him so marvellous a fountain of knowledge, that, though the words flowed from his mouth like a torrent, they were too slow to express his thoughts. . . . He had to pray that God would moderate the inexhaustible flood of his ideas, saying, 'Restrain, Lord, the tide of Thy grace.' . . . For that sea of knowledge, which would unceasingly flow forth by his tongue, overwhelmed him by its waves." [2] This great man of words was also a man of action: when Sapor, king of Persia, then the most redoubtable enemy of the Romans, came for the third time to besiege Nisibis, the bulwark of the faith and of the empire, Ephrem hastened to place himself by the side of the holy bishop Jacobus, who had baptized him; the two

[1] Rosweyde, p. 268.

[2] St. Gregory Nyss., *Ecomium Ephræm. Syr.*, p. 11, quoted by M. de Broglie, from whom we have borrowed many of the facts which follow.

together, first upon the breach, superintended the works of defence, which ended in the defeat of the Persians. Some years later, when Julian, directing his arms against Persia, at the height of the persecution which he had renewed, seemed to threaten Edessa, which boasted of being the earliest converted city of the East, Ephrem sustained the courage of the inhabitants by his discourses, and to this critical moment belongs a famous oration entitled the *Pearl*, designed to celebrate under that symbol the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price of the Gospel, and in which are mingled "the mystic ardours of a solitary and the zeal of a Christian soldier hastening to his martyrdom." A faithful observer of monastic poverty, in the will which he dictated to his disciples, and in which he describes himself as a labourer who has finished his day's work, and a merchant traveller who returns to his own country, he declares that he has nothing to bequeath but his counsels and prayers—for Ephrem, says he, "has not even a staff or a wallet." His last words were a protest in favour of the dignity of man redeemed by the Son of God. The young and pious daughter of the governor of Edessa having come in tears to receive his last sigh, he made her swear on his deathbed to use no longer a litter carried by slaves, because the apostle has said, "The head of man should bear no yoke but that of Christ." [1]

In his discourses, this holy doctor condemns severely those vices and passions of the world which hid themselves under the robe of the monk. He denounces the contrast, then too frequent, between the exterior and the heart of the Religious—between the appearance and reality. He laments already the relaxation of ancient severity.[2] And yet he had lived for several years among the hermits of

[1] See in the *Tableau de l'Eloquence Chrétienne au* IV^e^ *Siècle* by M. Villemain, his excellent sketch of St. Ephrem.—Comp. ALBERT DE BROGLIE, iii. 191; iv. 356.

[2] EPHREM SYR., t. iii. p. 539; ap. MOEHLER, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

Mesopotamia, who reduced themselves in some degree to the state of savages, and who were surnamed *Browsers* (βοσκοί), because they had no other food than the mountain herbs, which they cut every morning with a knife, and ate uncooked.[1] While he was still living,[2] a Syrian monastery opened its doors to St. Simeon Stylites, who, from the top of his column, where he remained forty-eight years, was to present to the world the spectacle of the strangest and rudest penitence which it had yet seen. Such prodigies were, no doubt, necessary to strike the imagination and seize the conviction of the independent and nomadic people of these deserts; for it must not be forgotten that the Roman world under Constantine and his immediate successors were still half pagan. The rural districts especially remained faithful to idolatry. The monks succeeded at last in shaking their faith and converting them. Villages and entire tribes were led to the faith of Christ by the preaching of St. Hilarion in Syria, and of St. Moyse among the Saracens. Other monks converted the Phœnicians.[3] St. Simeon Stylites saw, at the foot of his column, not only his compatriots the Syrians, but also Persians, Arabs, Armenians, and even men who had come from Spain, Britain, and Gaul, to look on that prodigy of austerity, that slayer of his own body. He rewarded them for their curiosity and admiration by preaching to them the Christian truth. They went away Christians. The Arabs came in bands of two or three hundred; and thousands among them, according to Theodoret, an eye-witness, enlightened by the light which descended from the column of the Stylite, abjured at his feet their idols and their vices, and returned Christians into their deserts.[4]

With such men for chiefs and masters, the monks spread their own manner of life simultaneously with the instructions of the faith, into all Mesopotamia, into Armenia, and

[1] SOZOMENE, vi. 33.
[2] ROSWEYDE, *Vit. Patr.*, p. 176.
[3] MOEHLER, p. 220.
[4] THEODORET, *Philothæus*, c. 26.

beyond the Euphrates as far as Persia and India;[1] and the native Religious of these distant regions were seen arriving in bands to join the pilgrims of the West, of Africa, and of Asia Minor, who came to adore at Jerusalem the traces of the passion of our Saviour.[2]

These monks were not only missionaries, but often also martyrs of the faith among these idolatrous nations. One day that the sons of the king of Persia were at the chase, three monks were led before them who had been found taken in one of the immense nets which the royal huntsmen held over the surface of a whole country. At the sight of these shaggy and almost savage men, the princes asked one of them if he was a man or a spirit.[3] The monk answered: "I am a man and a sinner, who am come here to weep for my sins, and to adore the living Son of God." The princes replied that there was no God but the sun: a controversy ensued, and ended by the execution of the three hermits, whom the young princes amused themselves by taking as a target for their arrows. The last and most illustrious of these martyrs was Anastasius, who was a soldier of Chosroes when the true cross was taken by that prince: the sight of the sacred wood made him a Christian: he went to Jerusalem to become a monk; taken prisoner by the Persians, he endured tortures and death clothed in his monk's robe, which he called his dress of glory.[4]

[1] "Illi enim Syros fere omnes, et ex Persis ac Saracenis quamplurimos ad religionem suam traduxerunt."—THEODORET, *Relig. Hist.*, lib. vi. c. 34.

[2] "De India, Perside, Ethiopia, monachorum quotidie turmas suscipimus."—S. HIERON., Ep. 7. *ad Lætam.*, c. 2.

[3] "Miserunt retia in longum per millia quadraginta. . . . Inventus est autem senex cum duobus discipulis intra retia. Et cum vidisset eum pilosum et terribilem aspectu. . . ."—*Vit. Patr.*, lib. v. c. 7.

[4] "Hæc vestis est gloriatio mea."—ACT. SS. BOLLAND., t. ii. *Jan.*, p. 433. His head was transferred to Rome, and deposited in the abbey of SS. Vincent and Anastasius *ad aquas Salvias*, near the place where St. Paul was beheaded. It is still venerated there, where is also admired a picture which represents his martyrdom, which is said to have come from Persia with his relics, and which is one of the most ancient monuments of Christian art.

Up to this period all these saints and monks lived in groups, under the sway of a discipline, always severe, but changeable, and varied according to the climates and individual instincts. This did not sufficiently preserve zeal from excess, nor weakness from scandalous falls. Certain primitive rules indeed existed, which circulated under the name of Anthony, of Macarius, of Pacome especially, and of his successor Orsiesus, but they had neither the authority nor the extent necessary to form a lasting legislation. Then God raised up a great man, St. Basil. His glory consists not only in having vanquished heresy and made head against emperors, but in having given to the monastic order a constitution which was shortly adopted by all the monks of the East.

Born in Cappadocia of a rich and noble family, educated with care at Cæsarea, at Constantinople, and above all at Athens, he had there contracted with his young compatriot, Gregory of Nazianzus, that indissoluble friendship, austere and impassioned, which fills so fine a page in the history of Christian affections and literature. "It was," says Gregory, "one soul which had two bodies. Eloquence, the thing in the world which excites the greatest desire, inspired us with an equal ardour, but without raising any jealousy between us: we lived in each other. . . . We knew only two paths: the first and the most beloved, that which led towards the Church and its doctors; the other less exalted, which conducted us to the school and our masters."[1] Excited by the emulation which was born of that tender intimacy, Basil drank largely at the fountains of profane knowledge and philosophy. From these he drew enough of noble pride to refuse all the dignities that were offered to him. But his sister Macrine, who, despite her rare beauty, in consequence of the death of her betrothed, remained a virgin, soon initiated him into a still higher and more disinterested philosophy. He quitted the schools to travel in search of the saints and

[1] S. Greg. Nazian., orat. 43. Compare A. de Broglie, iii. 288.

monks: he lived with them in Egypt, in Palestine, and in Syria; he recognised the ideal of his soul, which was enamoured at once of intellect and piety, in these men, who appeared to him travellers here below and citizens of heaven. He made up his mind to live as they did; and having returned to his own country, he retired at twenty-six into his paternal domain, which was situated in Pontus.

It was a savage place, barred by profound forests from all access of men, situated at the foot of a mountain environed with woods, deep valleys, and a rapid river, which fell foaming over a precipice. In this cherished retreat, which his imagination, inspired by classic influences, compared to the isle of Calypso, he could cultivate at ease that taste for the study of God's grandeur and perfection in the works of Nature, which inspired him with his famous discourse upon the Six Days of Creation, known under the name of the *Hexameron*. And there, seeing in the distance the Euxine Sea, he was naturally led to connect the various aspects and thousand sounds of the sea with those of the human crowd, which he believed himself to have left for ever, and that contemplation dictated to him a passage too fine not to be quoted. "The sea offers us a lovely spectacle when its surface is bright, or when, rippling gently under the wind, it is tinted with purple and green: when, without beating violently upon the shore, it surrounds the earth, and caresses her with its wild embraces. But it is not this which constitutes in the eyes of God the grace and beauty of the sea; it is its works which make it beautiful. See here the immense reservoir of water which irrigates and fertilises the earth, and which penetrates into her bosom to reappear in rivers, in lakes, and in refreshing fountains; for in traversing the earth it loses its bitterness, and is almost civilised by the distance it travels. Thou art beautiful, oh sea! because in thy vast bosom thou receivest all the rivers, and remainest between thy shores without ever overleaping them. Thou art beautiful, because the clouds rise from

thee. Thou art beautiful with thine isles spread over thy surface, because thou unitest by commerce the most distant countries—because, instead of separating them, thou joinest the nations, and bearest to the merchant his wealth and to life its resources. But if the sea is beautiful before men and before God, how much more beautiful is that multitude, that human sea, which has its sounds and murmurs, voices of men, of women, and of children, resounding and rising up to the throne of God!"[1]

Upon the other bank of the river Iris, the mother and sister of Basil, forgetting their nobility and wealth, prepared themselves for heaven, living on terms of complete equality with their servants and other pious virgins. He himself was followed into his retreat by the friend of his youth, by his two brothers,[2] and an always increasing crowd of disciples. He then gave himself up entirely to austerities, to the study of sacred literature, and to the cultivation of the soil, eating only hard bread, lighting no fire, but fed and warmed by the ardour of his zeal for the service of God and the salvation of souls. In that rude apprenticeship he strengthened his soul for the great conflicts which raised him to the first rank among the doctors of the Church and holy pontiffs. When Julian the Apostate threatened the world with a return to that paganism which was scarcely vanquished and far from being extirpated, St. Basil was drawn by force out of his solitude to be ordained a priest, and some years after was made bishop of Cæsarea. It is well known how he astonished the world by the superiority of his genius and his eminent virtue. Ecclesiastical history does not contain a more glorious episode than the narrative of his intrepid and calm resistance to the attempts of the Emperor Valens against the faith of Nicæa, and his celebrated conference with the prefect of the prætorium

[1] I borrow from M. St. Marc Girardin, a translation which has not been surpassed.

[2] St. Gregory of Nysse, and St. Peter of Sebaste.

Modestus. "I have never met with so much boldness," said the minister of the imperial will. "Doubtless," answered the saint, "you have never met a bishop." On going out from that conference, the prime minister said to his master, "Sire, we are vanquished; this bishop is above menaces; we have no alternative but force."[1] The emperor drew back, and the Church hailed Basil as the hero of the time. However, his great soul was as tender as strong; his unshaken faith longed always for a reconciliation with the misled Christians. Saddened by the divisions of the Church in the East, he passionately implored help from the West, from Pope Damasus, and, above all, from his illustrious rival in glory and courage, St. Athanasius. He understood so well the necessity of being gentle with the weak, that a certain leaning towards error was imputed to him, from which Athanasius defended him by two memorable epistles against the accusations of those extravagant minds, which are to be found in all ages, pusillanimous at the moment of peril, bold and implacable before and after the storm.

The monks whom he had trained were the most useful auxiliaries of orthodoxy against the Arians and semi-Arians, enemies of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost. They exercised the most salutary influence on all the clergy. Thus he continued to govern and multiply them, as priest and as bishop. He regarded them as the richest treasure of his diocese. He called them into his episcopal city; then, traversing the towns and plains of Pontus, he renewed the aspect of that province by collecting into regular monasteries the isolated monks, by regulating the exercise of prayer and psalmody, the care of the poor, and the practice of labour, and by opening numerous convents of nuns.[2] He became thus the first type of those monk-bishops who subsequently became the benefactors of all Europe and the originators of Christian

[1] S. GREGOR. NAZIANZ., pp. 350, 351.
[2] RUFFINUS, *Hist. Eccles.*, lib. ii. c. 9.

civilisation in the West. He seemed to have had especially in view the union of active with contemplative life, and of connecting the monks with the clergy and Christian people that they might become its light and strength.[1] Such is the spirit of his numerous writings upon monastic life, which demonstrate the grandeur of his genius, not less than his epistles and doctrinal works, which have gained him the name of the Christian Plato. Such especially appears his famous Rule, which shortly became the code of religious life, and was eventually the sole Rule recognised in the East. Drawn out in the form of answers to two hundred and three different questions upon the obligations of the solitary life, and upon the meaning of the most important texts of Holy Scripture, and partly adapted to communities of both sexes, it bore throughout the stamp of the good sense and moderation which characterised its author.[2] It insisted upon the dangers of absolute solitude for humility and charity, upon the necessity of minute obedience, upon the abnegation of all personal property as of all individual inclination, and, above all, upon the perpetual duty of labour. He would not allow even fasting to be an obstacle to work: "If fasting hinders you from labour," says he, "it is better to eat like the workmen of Christ that you are." This was the pivot of monastic life, according to this patriarch of an institution, which so many ignorant and idle generations have not blushed to accuse of indolence. "Athletes, workmen of Jesus Christ," says this great bishop, "you have engaged yourselves to fight for Him all the day, to bear all its heat. Seek not repose before its end; wait for the

[1] "Monasteriis exstructis, ita monachorum institutum temperavit, ut solitariæ atque actuosæ vitæ utilitates præclare simul conjungeret."—*Brev. Rom., die* 14 *Junii.*

[2] "If St. Anthony was the restorer of cenobitical life, if St. Pacome gave it a better form, it is St. Basil who has brought it to entire perfection, in binding by formal vows those who attach themselves to this manner of life."—HELYOT, *Hist. des Ordres Monastiques*, 1st part, c. 13. Compare BULTEAU, *Hist. des Moines d'Orient*, pp. 305, 402.

evening, that is to say, the end of life, the hour at which the householder shall come to reckon with you, and pay you your wages."

There is a name inseparable from the great name of Basil, that of another doctor of the Church, Gregory of Nazianzus, the tender friend of Basil's heart and youth, the companion of his studies and his retirement, the associate of his struggles and victories for orthodoxy, and, after his premature death, the celebrator of his glory. Like him, but not without a struggle, Gregory had renounced the world, reserving of all his temporal possessions only his eloquence, to employ it in the service of God. "I abandon to you all the rest," said he, addressing himself to the pagans, at the moment when Julian interdicted to the Christians even the study of letters —" wealth, birth, glory, authority, and all possessions here below, the charm of which vanishes like a dream: but I put my hand upon eloquence, and regret none of the labours, nor journeys by land and sea which I have undertaken to acquire it." [1] And later he added, "One sole object in the world has possessed my heart: the glory of eloquence. I have sought it in all the earth, in the west, in the east, and especially at Athens, that ornament of Greece. I have laboured long years for it; but this glory also I come to lay at the feet of Christ, under the empire of that divine word which effaces and throws into the shade the perishable and changeful form of all human thought." [2] He had besides shared with Basil his solitary and laborious life, and when they were both drawn from that to be condemned to the still more painful toils of the episcopate, Gregory loved to recall to his friend the pleasant times when they cultivated together their monastic garden. "Who shall bring back to us," he wrote to his friend, "those days when we laboured together from morning till evening? when sometimes we cut wood, sometimes we hewed stones? when we planted and

[1] S. GREG. NAZIANZ., *Oper.*, t. i. p. 132, translation of M. Villemain.
[2] *Carmina*, p. 636, translation of M. de Broglie.

watered our trees, when we drew together that heavy waggon, the marks of which have so long remained on our hands?"[1] He was called to Constantinople to confound the heretics there; and it is well known what glory he won by his courage and that eloquence which had at last found its true element, and how the will of the Emperor Theodosius, and the suffrages of the second Œcumenical Council, elevated him, in spite of himself, to the patriarchal chair, where he would employ against the Arians only the weapons of persuasion. "Let us never be insolent when the times are favourable," he had already said to the orthodox, delivered from the persecution of Julian—"let us never show ourselves hard to those who have done us wrong: let us not imitate the acts which we have blamed. Let us rejoice that we have escaped from peril, and abhor everything that tends to reprisals. Let us not think of exiles and proscriptions; drag no one before the judge; let not the whip remain in our hands; in a word, do nothing like that which you have suffered."[2] He descended from that elevation as promptly as he could, happy to leave the centre of theological dissensions, and of that corruption the excesses of which he had depicted with so much boldness and grief. It was to re-enter into a rustic solitude in his native country. There he ended his life, after two years divided between the hardest austerities of monastic life and the cultivation of poetry, which he continued to pursue, that the pagans might not be left in sole possession of the palm of literature, and also to give a free course to the noble and delicate sadness of his soul.[3] His graceful, melancholy, and

[1] S. GREG. NAZIANZ., Ep. 9 and 13.

[2] *Orat.* v. 36, 37.—The following passage is also well worthy of remark: "Non odium significando et conviciando sollicite et anxie verba faciebam, dolens, non plagas infigens. Leniter verbis et convenienter compellabam, ut verbi defensor misericordis et mansueti, AC NEMINEM CONTERENTIS. Hæc meis inscripta erant tabulis."—*Oper.*, ed. Caillau., t. ii. p. 737.

[3] See the charming pages which M. Villemain has devoted to the poetry of St. Gregory of Nazianzus in his *Tableau de l'Eloquence Chrétienne au* IV^e *Siècle.*

sometimes sublime verses have gained him a place almost as high as his profound knowledge of divine things; and the monastic order may boast of having produced in him the father of Christian poetry, as well as the doctor who has merited the name of Theologian of the East.

No other man had painted monastic life with an admiration so impassioned as the illustrious friend of Basil in his discourse upon the death of Julian, in that passage where he apostrophises him as the enemy of the Church, confronting him with "those men who are on earth, yet above the earth, . . . at once bound and free, subdued and unsubduable, . . . who have two lives, one which they despise, another which alone fills all their thoughts; become immortal by mortification; strangers to all desire, and full of the calm of the divine love; who drink at the fountain of its light, and already reflect its rays; whose angelical psalmodies fill all the watches of the night, and whose rapturous souls already emigrate towards heaven; . . . solitary, and mingling in the concerts of another life; chastising all voluptuousness, but plunged in ineffable delights; whose tears drown sin, and purify the world; whose extended hands stay the flames, tame the beasts, blunt the swords, overturn the battalions, and come now, be assured, to confound thy impiety, even though thou shouldst escape some days, and play thy comedy with thy demons."[1]

Thus, a century after Anthony had inaugurated cenobitical life in the deserts of Egypt, it was firmly established in Asia Minor, and carried as far as the shores of the Euxine, by Basil and his illustrious friend. From that time no province of the Oriental Church was without monks. They established themselves like an orthodox garrison in the midst and at the gates of Constantinople, the principal centre of the heresies which desolated the Church in the fourth century. Acquiring in solitude and labour that strength which contemporary society, enslaved and degraded by the imperial

[1] *Orat.* iv., M. de Broglie's translation.

rule, had lost, the monks and nuns formed already an entire nation, with the rule of Basil for their code; a nation distinct at once from the clergy and from the common believers; a new and intrepid people, spreading everywhere, and multiplying unceasingly, and in which neither the friends nor the enemies of the Church could fail to recognise her principal force.

Her enemies especially did not deceive themselves on this score, and from thence arose a permanent and desperate opposition against the new institution. This arose from various sources,[1] but the efforts and results by which it showed itself were identical. The pagans and Arians, who, united, formed the great majority of the population of the empire, showed equal virulence. All the *savants*, philosophers, and men of letters among the pagans, were emulous in their protest. The impassioned activity of the monks against idolatry, their efforts, more and more successful, to extirpate it from the heart of the rural population, naturally exasperated the last defenders of the idols. Besides, the voluntary suffering which they preached and practised, the subjection to which they reduced their bodies, the war which they declared with nature, were the antipodes of Greek wisdom. All the wit that remained in that worn-out society was exercised at their expense. The rhetorician Libanus[2] pursued them with his mockeries, accused them of making their virtue consist in wearing mourning, and hoped to wound them by calling them *black men*.[3] The sophist Eunapius lamented that it was enough for any one, as he says, to appear in public with a black robe, in order to exercise tyrannical authority with impunity. He depicted the monks as men whose lives were not only base but

[1] MOEHLER, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

[2] *Oratio pro Templis*, pp. 10, 13, 28, 30, 49; ed. 1639.

[3] Black was not yet, however, exclusively adopted by the monks at the time when Libanus wrote. It is supposed that St. Anthony, and many monks contemporary with him, were clothed in white.

criminal.[1] The echo that all these sarcasms would awaken amid the corruption of the two Romes may be supposed. But amongst these vain protests of a vanquished world, those who went farthest in rage and rancour against the Religious were the rich, and heads of families, who saw their children and heirs abandon them to bury themselves in solitude and penitence; for it was then, as it has always been since, in the bosoms of the most opulent families that these sacrifices were consummated.

The Arians were still more implacable than the pagans. The tendency of these enemies of the divinity of Christ was in everything to abuse, degrade, and restrain the spirit of Christianity. How should the monastic life, which was its most magnificent development, escape their fury? The war between them and the monks was therefore long and cruel. The emperors became their accomplices. The persecution which paganism had scarcely time to light up to its own advantage under Julian, was pitiless under the Arian Constantius, and more skilful, without being more victorious, under the Arian Valens. In the time of Constantius entire monasteries, with the monks they contained, were burnt in Egypt; and after the death of Athanasius, in the frightful persecution which the intruder Lucius, imposed by Valens, raised in Alexandria, a troop of imperial soldiers ravaged the solitude of Nitria, and massacred its inhabitants.[2] Twenty-three monks and eleven bishops, all children of the desert, are named among the confessors of the orthodox faith who were then condemned to the mines or to banishment.[3] The slavery of the unfortunate rich men whom the imperial government condemned to fill municipal offices under the name of *curials* and of *decurions*, and to be held perpetually responsible to the treasury, is known. In that age of fetters, this chain seemed the hardest of all.[4] Many sought to break it by taking refuge in the voluntary servi-

[1] EUNAP., *in Adesio, Vit. Philos.*, c. 4.
[2] RUFFIN., liv. ii. c. 3, 4.
[3] THEODORET, iv. 22.
[4] CHAMPAGNY, *op. cit.*

tude of the cloister. The Arians profited by that pretext to suggest to the Emperor Valens a law which commanded the Count of the East to search out the deserts of the Thebaid, and seize these men, whom he calls loose deserters, in order to send them back to their civil obligations.[1] Another law of the same emperor, inspired by the same spirit, endeavoured to compel the monks to military service, and beat to death those who refused to enrol themselves. A great number were sacrificed for this cause in Nitria.[2] Most of the magistrates gladly executed these sovereign orders; and the monks were everywhere snatched from their retreats, surrounded, imprisoned, beaten, and exposed to most tyrannical harassments.[3] These legal cruelties encouraged the violence of private persons who were animated by hatred of the faith of Nicæa or of Christian virtue. Under pretext of penetrating into the monasteries, and bringing out of them the young monks fit for military service, bands of ruffians forced their gates, invaded their cells, seized the monks, and threw them forth into the streets or upon the highways; and each boasted of having been the first to denounce a monk, to strike him, or to cast him into a dungeon. "It is intolerable," said these friends of humanity, "to see men free and noble, healthy and strong, masters of all the joys of this world, condemn themselves to a life so hard and so revolting."

Thus the philosophers and the emperors, the heretics and

[1] This law is of 373.—"Quidam ignaviæ sectatores, desertis civitatum muneribus, captant solitudines ac secreta, et specie religionis cum cœtibus monazontum congregantur. Hos igitur atque hujusmodi *intra Ægyptum* deprehensos *per comitem Orientis* erui e latebris consulta præceptione mandavimus, atque ad munia patriarum subeunda revocari."—Leg. *Quidam*, 63; Cod. Theod., lib. xii. tit. i., *De Decur.* Compare RAYNOUARD, *Hist. du Droit Municipal*, t. i. c. II.

[2] "Multi monachorum Nitriæ per tribunos et milites cæsi. Valens, lege data ut monachi militarent, nolentes fustibus interfici jussit."—ST. HIERON.

[3] "Cum monachi publica magistratuum auctoritate extrema paterentur."—MONTFAUCON, *in edit. S. Joan. Chrysost.*

the profligates, were leagued against the cenobites, and the invectives of the one had for a corollary the violence of the others. And even among orthodox Christians there were critical spirits: these reproached the new institution with withdrawing its disciples from public life; depriving society of the beneficent influence of those who were best qualified to serve it; stealing away from their duties men born for the good of their neighbours and their kind; and, in short, opening too honourable an asylum to indolence, unworthiness, and hypocrisy.

It was then that God raised for the defence of His servants another great man, greater by his eloquence than any that had hitherto appeared in the Church—St. John Chrysostom, the Christian Cicero. Born at Antioch, his friend and the companion of his studies was a young man who desired to embrace the monastic profession, and who had proposed to him to prelude it by life in common. But he himself was destined for the bar and public life. He was, besides, retained in the world by the love of his mother, who besought him not to render her a widow for the second time. Suddenly the two friends were chosen as bishops. Then John, convinced of his unworthiness, abandoned at once the world, his friend, and his mother, and escaped ordination by flying into solitude.[1] But in that solitude he discovered a new world. It was in the mountains near Antioch that he sought a retreat, and these mountains were already peopled by monks, emulators of the disciples of Anthony and Basil. The ardent young man took one of them, an old Syrian of formidable austerity,[2]

[1] He himself relates this touching story in the first book of his fine treatise *De Sacerdotio*. In book sixth and last of this treatise, he points out to his friend Basil that the life of the priest and bishop is still more meritorious and difficult than that of the monk. This St. Basil, friend of Chrysostom, and Bishop of Raphana, must not be confounded with the great St. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea, who was twenty years older than St. John Chrysostom.

[2] PALLAD., *Dial. de Vit. S. Joan. Chrysost.*, c. 5.

for his master and guide in monastic life, and devoted four years to that spiritual education. Then he passed two years alone, secluded in a cavern, exclusively occupied in subduing his passions, which he compares to wild beasts. It is thus that he prepared unawares the power of that eloquence which was to delight his contemporaries, make the very churches echo with the applauses which it raised, and draw out of the cities a crowd intoxicated with the happiness of hearing him, and scarcely sheltered from the ardour of the sun by vast awnings suspended over them. But, above all, it was in this rude apprenticeship that he learned to know the combats and victories of the monks. He derived from this the right and the power of speaking the truth concerning their life, and in 376, at the height of the persecution of Valens, he wrote his three books *Against the Adversaries of Monastic Life*,[1] which carried his fame afar, and vindicated innocence and uprightness with the incomparable eloquence of which his name has become the symbol.

He shows, in the first place, by the example of the Jews and pagan emperors, the terrible chastisements which are incurred by persecution of the saints and friends of God. He addresses himself then to those fathers whom the conversion of their sons had rendered furious, and who cried out, I burn, I rend, I burst with rage![2] He shows them, by examples borrowed even from profane history, the grandeur and fertility of sacrifice, labour, and solitude. He paints to us one of these young and noble lords, who might then be seen clothed more miserably than the meanest of their slaves, labouring barefooted on the earth, lying down upon hard couches, emaciated by fasting, and he asks triumphantly if there had ever been a greater or more noble victory of human courage than that sacrifice of all worldly possessions for the possessions of the soul. Then turning to

[1] *Adversus Oppugnatores Vitæ Monasticæ.*

[2] "Uror, laceror, disrumpor."—CHRYSOST., *Adv. Opp. Vit. Mnn.*, ii. 8.

the Christian parents who have been persuaded to mingle their lamentations with the rage of the pagan fathers, he crushes them under the weight of the divine authority and reason enlightened by faith. That admirable invective against the parents who, opposing the vocation of their children, enslave and kill their souls, a thousand times more cruel than those who murder their sons or sell them as slaves to the barbarians, should be quoted entire. He exhorts them ardently to confide the education of their sons to the solitaries—to those *men of the mountain* whose lessons he himself had received. He grants that they might afterwards return to the world, but only after having initiated them thus in Christian virtue, for the monasteries were the sole asylums for purity of manners in the midst of universal corruption. These are, he says, refuges destined to fill up the abyss which separates the ideal of the law of Christ from the reality of the manners of Christians; certainly he would turn no one from public life or social duties, if society was faithful to its duties; monasteries would be useless if the cities were Christian. But they were not so, and to prove it, the holy doctor drew a picture of the corruption which he had witnessed at Antioch and elsewhere.

Nothing could be more repulsive than these manners, which reproduced all the excesses of ancient debauchery in their most revolting refinements. How deeply everything was poisoned in that empire, still so dazzling for its strength and immensity—how little the conversion of the emperors had converted the world—and how miserable was the condition of souls and consciences amid that over-vaunted alliance of the Church and the empire—is seen there. Society was Christian only in name; the heart and mind remained pagan. In the East especially, where the bishops and clergy were infested by stubborn and incessantly-renewed heresies, and where the government of souls was either absorbed or rendered impossible by the perils of orthodoxy, the monks alone offered to Christian virtue a

resource and a hope. Thus their intrepid apologist never names monastic life otherwise than as *the true philosophy*. It was this that made simple Christians more powerful than emperors, because it put them above the vices which ravaged the empire; and he develops this idea in an admirable supplement to the three books of his apology, where he establishes a comparison between the power, the wealth, and the excellence of a king, and those of a monk living in the true and Christian philosophy. He compares them in war and in peace, in their daily and nightly occupations, in prosperity and in adversity, in life and in death; and he awards the palm of incontestable superiority to the potentate who has the privilege of delivering souls from the tyranny of the devil by his prayers alone.[1]

These magnificent pleadings sum up all the arguments in favour of monastic life with an eloquence which remains always true. They have never been better expressed; and it is enough to re-read and repeat them, against the same objections, the same sophisms, the same falsehoods perpetually reproduced. After the lapse of fifteen centuries, we find these noble words always opportune and conclusive; because in that constantly renewed struggle between the friends and enemies of monastic life, it is the unvarying ground of human nature—it is the soul and its life by love and faith—it is the eternal revolt of evil against the sole influence which ensures victory and fertility to goodness, the spirit of sacrifice—which are brought in question.

The great and celebrated doctor did not content himself with this brilliant stroke. He continued, during all the course of his career, to defend and extol the monastic institution, not only as he admired it in the Thebaid, where the tabernacles of the cenobites shone, as he says, with a splendour purer than that of the stars in heaven,[2] but, even

[1] "Comparatio potentiæ, divitiarum et excellentiæ regis cum monacho in verissima et Christiana philosophia vivente."

[2] *Homil. in Matth.* 8, p. 147, edit. Gaume.

such as it was seen, with its infirmities and divisions already apparent, throughout the East. Almost all his works bear the trace of this predilection; but it is nowhere more visible than in his Ninety Homilies upon St. Matthew,[1] preached during his sojourn at Antioch, from which we shall quote a curious passage, which is strangely and sadly seasonable even in our own time.

He here sets forth the effect which the contrast of monastic life with the feasts, pomps, debauches, and prodigalities of wealth should produce upon the souls of the poor. He supposes a man of the lower classes transported suddenly into the midst of the theatres of Constantinople, where voluptuousness used all its resources to stimulate the sated appetite of the wealthy classes of the Lower Empire, and he adds: "The poor man will be irritated by that spectacle; he will say to himself, 'See what profligates, what debauchees—children perhaps of butchers or shoemakers, and even of slaves—see what luxury they display; whilst I, a free man, born of free parents, who gain my living by honest labour,—I cannot enjoy such happiness even in a dream;' and so saying he goes away, penetrated with rage and sadness. But among the monks he experiences an entirely contrary impression. There he sees the sons of the rich, the offspring of the most illustrious races, clad in garments which the poorest would not wear, and joyful of that mortification. Think how much more pleasant his poverty will appear to him! When the courtesan at the theatre exhibits herself all adorned and jewelled, the poor man mutters with rage, thinking that his own wife neither wears nor possesses any such ornaments; and the rich man returns to his house inflamed by his recollections, and already the captive of his guilty desires, to scorn and ill-use his wife. But those who return from visiting the monks bring with them only peace

[1] A valuable picture of the internal life of monasteries, and a comparison of monastic with secular life, should also be remarked in the Homilies on the *First Epistle to Timothy*, t. xi. pp. 476–479, edit. Gaume.

and happiness; the wife finds her husband delivered from all unjust covetousness, more gentle, more accommodating, more tender than before; the poor man consoles himself in his poverty, and the rich learn virtue and abstinence."[1]

Doubtless this striking vindication did not put an end to the persecutions of which the monks were victims. They continued to be slandered, vexed, and cruelly treated whenever, as often happened, the imperial power became the prey or the instrument of heresy. A law of Valentinian II. ordained, in 390, that all the monks should leave the towns, where they had become more and more numerous since the time of Basil, and retire into the desert.[2] But it was abrogated by Theodosius.

Chrysostom, whose life we do not undertake to relate, was afterwards raised to the See of Constantinople. He gained there the admiration of the whole Church by the heroism of his long martyrdom. He employed all his authority to protect the monks, as also to maintain regularity in the order. With one hand he severely repressed the vagabond monks, who fled from discipline, yet pretended to keep up the exterior and the respect due to their order; on the other, he entered into relations with the Religious who were already to be found among the Goths,[3] with whom the empire began to be inundated, and sent monks to Phœnicia to labour there for the extirpation of paganism from that country.

However, this great champion of the honour and liberty of the monks was not destined to find among all of them the gratitude which he merited. In these violent struggles

[1] ". . . Intra se dicet: Meretrix illa et scortator, lanionum vel sutorum, nonnunquam servorum filii. Ego vero liber et ex liberis ortus. . . . Pauper ejulabit et deplorabit uxorem suam, videns nihil istiusmodi habentem."—S. JOANN. CHRYSOST., *in Matth. Homil.* 68, ed. Gaume, t. vii. p. 761.

[2] "Quicumque sub professione monachi reperiuntur, deserta loca et vastas solitudines sequi atque habitare jubeantur."—COD. THEOD., lib. xvi. tit. 3.

[3] Ep. 14 and 207.

against the abuses and injustice of Byzantine government, spiritual and temporal, which gained him from the historian Zosimus the name of *demagogue*—which inflamed against him the imbecile jealousy of the Emperor Arcadius, the wounded pride of the Empress Eudoxia, and the interested rage of the courtiers and the rich, and which twice thrust him from his patriarchal see—Chrysostom had won the sympathies of the people, who often rose on his behalf. But he had constantly to contend, not only against simoniacal bishops and a servile clergy, but even against monks who too often mingled in the intrigues and violence of which he was the victim. He has himself related to us how, during the cruel fatigues of his exile, the short interval of hospitable repose which he hoped to find at Cæsarea was disturbed by a horde of monks, or rather of ferocious beasts, placed there by a courtier bishop, who terrified the clergy and even the soldiers of the garrison, and succeeded in expelling him from the city in all the heat of a fever by which he was devoured, and at the risk of falling into the hands of the Isaurian brigands who ravaged the country.[1] But the violence of wretches, unworthy of the name and robe they bore, drew from him no recrimination, and especially no retractation of the praise which he had up to that time lavished on the true monks. He had a soul too just and too lofty to forget for a personal wrong all the examples of monastic courage and virtue with which his memory was stored. He especially loved to recall that he had seen the hermits of Antioch, whose disciple and advocate he had been, quit their mountains and caverns to console and encourage the inhabitants of Antioch threatened by the bloody vengeance of Theodosius. While the philosophers of the town went to hide themselves in the desert, the inhabitants of the desert issued from it to brave and partake the common danger. In the midst of the universal consternation they appeared before the ministers of

[1] "Δροῦγγος μοναζόντων . . . τῶν θηρίων τουτῶν."—*Epist. ad Olympiad.* 14, iii. 717, ed. Gaume.

imperial wrath like lions, says Chrysostom, and made them suspend the execution of the pitiless sentence.

"Go," said one of the monks, a simple and unlettered man, to the commissioners of Theodosius, "go and say from me to the emperor: You are an emperor, but you are a man, and you command men who are your fellow-creatures, and who are made in the image of God. Fear the wrath of the Creator if you destroy His work. You, who are so much displeased when your images are overthrown, shall God be less if you destroy His? Your statues of bronze are made anew and replaced, but when you shall have killed men, the images of God, how can you resuscitate the dead, or even restore a hair of their head?"[1] Having said this, and the judge yielding, they left the city and returned into their solitude.

The same year which saw the barbarity of the monks of Cæsarea toward St. John Chrysostom is for ever memorable in the annals of humanity by the heroic sacrifice of an Eastern monk. In its desperate struggle against the religion which was to avenge and save the human race from its long decline, paganism had found a popular and strong refuge in the public spectacles. These circus games, which had been the price of Roman servitude, faithfully paid by the emperors to a degraded people, but which were as sanguinary as amid the struggles of her warlike history, preserved their fatal ascendancy over the hearts, the imaginations, and the habits of the Roman people. In vain had the doctors and defenders of the Christian faith expended since Tertullian their most generous efforts and unwearied eloquence against this remnant of the vanquished civilisation. In vain they represented to the disciples of the Gospel, the horror of these bloody games, in which so many thousand martyrs of every age, sex, and country had perished, and where the devil unceasingly recruited new victims, volun-

[1] St. John Chrysostom, Hom. 17 et 18, *ad Popul. Antioch.*—Theodoret, *Hist*, lib. v. c. 19.

tarily enslaved to luxury and cruelty, for the innumerable spectators. In vain, at last, the sovereign authority sanctioned the prohibitions of the Church. The public taste had stubbornly maintained its favourite recreation during all the fourth century against the Church and the emperors. The combats of the gladiators were still the delight of Roman decadence. St. Augustine has left a striking picture of the infatuation which mastered their souls, when, like Alypius, they allowed themselves to be intoxicated by the blood shed in the amphitheatre, the fumes of which transformed into pagans, into savages, the most intelligent and worthy spectators. Under the reign of Honorius, the Christian poet Prudentius demanded in eloquent verse the abolition of that cruel scandal. "Let no one die again to delight us with his agonies! Let the odious arena, content with its wild beasts, give man no more for a bloody spectacle. Let Rome, vowed to God, worthy of her prince, and powerful by her courage, be powerful also by her innocence."[1]

The weak Honorius, far from listening to this appeal, had, on the occasion of his sixth consulate, restored to life an entirely pagan institution, the celebration of the secular games, and had specially included in it the combats of gladiators. When the announcement of these games had been published everywhere in all the empire, and had thus penetrated into the deserts, a monk, until then unknown, named Telemachus, of Nitria according to some, of Phrygia according to others, took one of those resolutions, the simple grandeur and immense results of which appear only after their accomplishment. He left his cell, travelled from the depths of the East to Rome, arrived there in time to be present at the imperial solemnities, entered the Colosseum, burst through the waves of people all palpitating with a ferocious curiosity, and threw himself between the gladiators engaged in combat. The indignant spectators pursued this untimely interruption, this fool, this black fanatic, first with

[1] *Contra Symm.*, ii. 114, translated by OZANAM, *Œuvres*, vol. ii. p. 231.

furious clamours, then with blows of stones and sticks. Stoned like the first martyrs of Christianity, Telemachus fell, and the gladiators whom he had desired to separate, completed the work. But his blood was the last shed in that arena where so much had flowed. The nobleness of his sacrifice showed the full horror of the abuse which he would have overthrown. An edict of Honorius proscribed for ever the games of gladiators. From that day it is no more heard of in history. The crime of so many centuries was extinguished by the blood of a monk, who happened to be a hero.

But we must here leave the monks of the East. They have occupied us thus far only as the precursors and models of the monks of the West. It is not our task to relate the conflicts, often generous, which they had to wage during the fifth and sixth centuries against the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, one of which contested the unity of the person of Jesus Christ, and the other the duality of His nature, which ravaged successively the Church of the East, and which were sustained with perseverance and obstinacy by almost all the emperors and patriarchs of Constantinople. Nor shall we need to contemplate the sad decline of their strength and virtue, to the state of stagnation, and then of decay, which became by degrees the dominant character of monastic life in the East.

Doubtless there still remained, after the glorious names which we have quoted up to this point, some names honoured and dear to the Church. St. Dalmatius, St. Euthymius, St. Sabas, St. Theodosius, St. John Climachus, and others, filled with the odour of their virtues the monasteries of Constantinople, the solitudes of the Thebaid, the *lauras*[1] of the environs

[1] The name of *laura* was given to a conjunction of several hermitages, the inhabitants of which lodged in cells removed at a certain distance from one another, but under the same superior. A *laura* presented almost the appearance of a modern charter-house. They were especially numerous about the environs of Jerusalem. The most extensive was that of St.

of Jerusalem, and the peaks and gorges of Sinai. In the struggles which demanded so much heroic patience, constant vigilance, and calm and intrepid courage, against the pride and blindness of the emperors, the passionate presumption of the empresses, and the bad faith and envy of the patriarchs of Constantinople, the orthodox popes and bishops found zealous and faithful auxiliaries among the monks of the East. Many suffered martyrdom in defence of the dogmas which had been established by the General Councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople.[1] Let us give a word of recollection in passing to that monk of the monastery of Studius, near the golden gate of Byzantium, who, in the conflict between Pope Felix III. and the patriarch Acacius, had alone the courage to publish the decree of excommunication pronounced against the latter by the pope and sixty-seven bishops of Italy. As the patriarch was on his way to church to celebrate pontifical mass, this monk attached to his mantle the sentence which condemned him, and thus made him carry it himself to the foot of the altar and before all the people.[2] He paid for this boldness with his life. History has not preserved his name, but has glorified his example, which, however, had scarcely any imitators.

For it must be admitted that, by means of theological discussions and subtleties, the spirit of intrigue and revolt introduced itself into the monasteries. Eutychius himself was a monk and abbot of Constantinople, and after him the Eutychians and the Origenists made numerous recruits in the monastic ranks: they appeared under the monastic habit as under the episcopal tiara, in the synods and in the councils. Among the true servants of God, false brethren glided in

Sabas, between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, where this saint assembled as many as seventy recluses. Most frequently, these *lauras*, after a certain time, were transformed into ordinary monasteries.

[1] Under the Emperor Anastasius, more than three hundred and fifty monks were massacred by the Eutychian heretics at Antioch.

[2] FLEURY, lib. XXX. c. 16.

almost everywhere, raising with warmth condemnable or extravagant opinions. Others, more numerous still, wandered from town to town or from house to house, and thus casting off all discipline, compromised at once the sanctity of their institution and the dignity of their robe. Their superiors, spiritual and temporal, used their authority in vain to repress that abuse, which reappeared perpetually.

To bring a remedy to these scandals and dangers, and with the formally acknowledged intention of restraining all these vagabond and turbulent monks, the General Council of Chalcedon, on the proposition of the Emperor Marcian, decreed that no monastery should be built henceforward without the consent of the bishop of the diocese, and that the monks, as much in the towns as in the country, should submit to the episcopal authority in everything, under pain of excommunication. They were expressly interdicted from going out of the monastery where they had been first received, and from mixing themselves with any ecclesiastical or secular business.[1] After having renewed an ancient prohibition against the marriage of monks, the Council ordained besides that every monastery, once consecrated by the bishop, should preserve its special destination in perpetuity, and could never become a secular habitation.[2]

These enactments became from that time part of the common law of Christendom, and must be kept in remembrance, because we shall have afterwards to record the numerous infractions to which they were subjected. Besides, they did not exercise upon the monks of the East a sufficiently efficacious influence to maintain them at the height of early times. After an age of unparalleled virtue and fruitfulness —after having presented to the monastic life of all ages, not only immortal models, but also a kind of ideal almost unattainable—the monastic order allowed itself to be over-

[1] See the speech of the emperor in the 6th *action* or session of the Council, and the Canons 4, 6, 7, 8, and 23.

[2] Canons 16 and 24.

come, through all the Byzantine empire, by that enfeeblement and sterility of which Oriental Christianity has been the victim. One by one, these glorious centres of light, knowledge, and life, which the Anthonys, the Hilarions, the Basils, and the Chrysostoms, had animated with their celestial light, were extinguished, and disappeared from the pages of history. While the monks of the West, under the vivifying influence of the Roman See, strove victoriously against the corruption of the ancient world, converted and civilised barbarous nations, transformed and purified the new elements, preserved the treasures of ancient literature, and maintained the traditions of all the secret and profane sciences, the monks of the East sank gradually into nothingness. Intoxicated by the double influence of courtierism and theological discord, they yielded to all the deleterious impulses of that declining society, of whose decay despotism was at once the result and the chastisement, and the laxness of whose morals gave an irresistible ascendancy to all the caprices of power, and constant impunity to its excesses. They could neither renovate the society which surrounded them, nor take possession of the pagan nations which snatched away every day some new fragment of the empire. They knew no better how to preserve the Church from the evil influences of the Byzantine spirit. Even the deposit of ancient knowledge escaped from their debilitated hands. They have saved nothing, regenerated nothing, elevated nothing.

They ended, like all the clergy of the East, by becoming slaves of Islamism and accomplices of schism. Since then, fifteen centuries have passed over their heads without interrupting their downfall for a single day, or preparing a regenerator for the future. It has been with religion as with the glory of arms and the splendour of letters. Following a mysterious but incontestable law, it is always from the East to the West that progress, light, and strength have gone forth. Like the light of day, they are born in the

East, but rise and shine more and more in proportion as they advance towards the West.

As the empire of the world passed from the Asiatics to the Greeks, and from the Greeks to the Romans, the truth passed from Jerusalem to Rome. Monastic life, like the Church, was founded in the East; but, like the Church also, acquired its true form only in the West. We must follow and study it there, to admire its complete and lasting grandeur.

BOOK III

MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE WEST

SUMMARY

ST. ATHANASIUS, exiled, propagates the monastic order in the West and at Rome, where religious life had already been known during the last persecutions: Aglæ and Boniface.—Development in Italy: Eusebius of Vercelli.—MOVEMENT OF THE ROMAN NOBILITY TOWARDS MONASTIC LIFE: last ray of aristocratic glory buried in the cloister.—The family Anicia.—The holy and religious patrician ladies: Marcella.—Furia.—Paula and her daughters.—Paulina and her husband Pammachus: Fabiola.—ST. JEROME, guide and historian of these holy women.—His monastic life at Chalcis and Bethlehem: he writes the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, and points out the errors of the false monks of his times.—ROMAN EMIGRATION INTO PALESTINE.—Jerome attracts to Jerusalem St. Paula and her daughter Eustochia: death of Paula.—The two Melanies at Jerusalem, at Rome, in Africa.—St. Paulin of Nole and his wife Teresia.—OPPOSITION AGAINST THE MONKS: popular invectives: the poet Rutilius.—St. Ambrose defends them.—His book *De Virginitate*: note on the use of the veil.—ST. AUGUSTINE: influence of the *Life of St. Anthony* by Athanasius, and the example of the monks, on his conversion: he lives always in the strictest seclusion.—Rule of St. Augustine.—His treatise *De Opere Monachorum* against the idle monks.—St. Fulgentius.—THE MONKS IN GAUL.—St. Athanasius.—ST. MARTIN, soldier, monk, and bishop.—His relations with St. Hilary.—He founds at Ligugé the first monastery of the Gauls.—His great position as Bishop of Tours: he protests against religious persecution.—He founds Marmoutier, and inhabits there one of the cells.—Sulpicius Severus: the monks of Gaul rebel against fasting.—THE MONASTERY OF LERINS: its doctors and its saints: Honoratius, Hilary of Arles, Vincent of Lerins, Salvian, Eucher, Lupus of Troyes.—St. Cæsar and his rule.—John Cassianus and St. Victor of Marseilles.—Pelagianism falsely imputed

to Lerins.—Other Gaulish monasteries: Réome in Burgundy.—Monasteries in Auvergne: Austremoine, Urbicus, the Stylites.—CONDAT in the Jura: the two brothers Romain and Lupicin: Eugende and Viventiole.—Influence of the monks upon the Burgundians.—The king Sigismund founds in Valais, Agaune, which becomes the monastic metropolis of the kingdom of Burgundy.—St. Severus exercises the same sway over the other barbarians, on the shores of the Danube: MEETING OF ODOACER AND SEVERIN.—SUMMARY: position of the cenobitical institution at the end of the fifth century; services already rendered to Christendom; duties of the monks in the Church; they are not yet counted among the clergy, yet notwithstanding almost all the Fathers and great doctors are monks.—ABUSES AND DISORDERS: monks *Gyrovagues* and *Sarabaites*.—Multiplicity and diversity of rules.—The monastic institution was not yet regulated.—A sovereign legislation and a new impulse were necessary: which St. Benedict gave.

BOOK III

MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE WEST

> Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her. . . . For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.—ISAIAH lxvi. 10, 12.

THE monastic stream, which had been born in the deserts of Egypt, divided itself into two great arms. The one spread in the East, at first inundated everything, then concentrated and lost itself there. The other escaped into the West, and spread itself by a thousand channels over an entire world which had to be covered and fertilised. We must return upon our track to follow it. Its beginnings are certainly less ancient and less brilliant, but the bed which it hollowed for itself is, on the other hand, deeper and more prolonged.

First of all, we anew encounter Athanasius, whom we have seen associated with the great patriarchs of the cenobites—the guest, the disciple, and the client of Anthony, the defender of Basil. His life is well known. Exile was then the portion of the confessors of the faith, but it was also the means chosen by God to spread afar the seed of virtue and truth. Constantine, who troubled the Church after having delivered it, inflicted that penalty first upon Athanasius. Constantius and the Arians subjected him to it so often, that he might be said to have lived almost as much in exile as in his see. He returned there always calm and intrepid, happy to be the victim and not the

author of these violences which always mark the weakness of an evil cause. Twice persecution constrained him to take refuge in the Thebaid, and three times an imperial order exiled him to the West. He became thus the natural link between the Fathers of the desert and those vast regions which their successors were to conquer and transform. Victor over Arianism by the strength of faith, courage, and patience alone, sustained by the popes against the emperors and bishops unfaithful to the divinity of Jesus, it belonged to him more than to any other to introduce the monastic institution to Rome, the head and centre of the Church, which could no longer remain a stranger to this new and wonderful development of Christian life. It was in 340 that he came for the first time to Rome, in order to escape the violence of the Arians, and invoke the protection of Pope Julius. This pope convoked the adversaries of the Bishop of Alexandria to a council, from which they drew back, knowing that if they appeared, they should there encounter a truly ecclesiastical tribunal, where there should be neither count nor soldiers at the doors, nor orders of the emperor.[1]

While the pope and the council did justice to the glorious defender of the divinity of Christ, he spread in Rome the first report of the life led by the monks in the Thebaid, of the marvellous exploits of Anthony, who was still alive, of the immense foundations which Pacome was at that time forming upon the banks of the higher Nile. He had brought with him two of the most austere of these monks. The one was Ammonius, so absorbed in the contemplation of divine things that he did not deign to visit any of the wonders of Rome, except the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul; the other, Isidore, gained all hearts by his amiable simplicity. These two served as guarantees of the truth of his tale, and as types to the Romans who might be tempted to follow their example. Monastic life, however, was not

[1] FLEURY, *Hist. Eccles.*, lib. xii. c. 20.

completely unknown in Rome. Traces of its existence are visible during the last persecutions, in the Acts of the martyrs: they have preserved to us the story of St. Aglæ, a noble and rich Roman lady, who lived a luxurious and disorderly life with Boniface, the first among seventy-three intendants who aided her to govern her vast domains. After that guilty *liaison* had lasted several years, Aglæ, moved by compunction, and having heard the Christians say that those who honoured the holy martyrs should share their protection before the tribunal of God, sent Boniface to the East, to seek there the relics of some martyr, in order to build them an oratory. "Madame," said the intendant to his mistress, at his departure, "if my relics come to you under the name of a martyr, will you receive them?" She reproved that pleasantry, but it was a promise: he died a martyr at Tarsus, after cruel tortures, voluntarily undergone. His body was brought to Aglæ, who received it with great and tender respect; and after having deposited it in a chapel, built at the distance of fifty stadia from Rome, she distributed all her goods to the poor, obtained thus the boon of a complete conversion, and took the veil as a nun, with some women who desired, like her, to devote themselves to penitence. She lived thus thirteen years in the retirement of the cloister; and after her sanctity had been manifested by more than one miracle, she died and was buried in the chapel of St. Boniface.[1]

At the peace of the Church, a daughter of Constantine had founded a first monastery of women above the tomb of St. Agnes, on the very site where, having won immortality in the memory of men by braving the judges and murderers of the empire, that young conqueror appeared, in the midst of an army of virgins, white and dazzling, to

[1] "Domina mea, sin vero meum corpus redierit in nomine martyris, suscipies illud? . . . Supervixit in habitu sanctimoniali."—ACT. SS. BOLLAND., d. 14 Maii, pp. 281–283. Compare BULTEAU, *Hist. Monast. d'Orient*, addit., p. 910.

the weeping parents, to give them assurance of her eternal happiness.[1]

The narratives of Athanasius had, notwithstanding, all the effect of a revelation. They roused the hearts and imaginations of the Romans, and especially of the Roman women. The name of monk, to which popular prejudice seems already to have attached a kind of ignominy,[2] became immediately an honoured and envied title. The impression produced at first by the exhortations of the illustrious exile, was extended and strengthened during the two other visits which he made to the Eternal City. Some time afterwards, on the death of St. Anthony, Athanasius, at the request of his disciples, wrote the life of the patriarch of the Thebaid; and this biography, circulating through all the West, immediately acquired there the popularity of a legend, and the authority of a confession of faith. Athanasius, to the eyes of all the Western Christians, was the hero of the age and the oracle of the Church. His genius and courage had raised him to the pinnacle of glory. How much credit that glory would add to his tale, and to the instructions which flowed from it, is apparent. Under this narrative form, says St. Gregory of Nazianzus, he promulgated the laws of monastic life.[3]

The town and environs of Rome were soon full of monasteries, rapidly occupied by men distinguished alike by birth, fortune, and knowledge, who lived there in charity, sanctity,

[1] "Vident in medio noctis silentio vigilantes exercitum virginum . . . Agnetem simili veste fulgentem, et ad dexteram ejus agnum nive candidiorem. . . . Perseveravit autem Constantia Augusta in virginitate, per quam multæ virgines nobiles et illustres et mediocres sacra velamina susceperunt."—S. AMBROS., *Act. S. Agn.*

[2] "Nulla eo tempore nobilium feminarum noverat Romæ propositum monachorum, nec audebat, propter rei novitatem, ignominiosum (ut tunc putabatur) et vile in populis nomen assumere."—S. HIERON., *Vit. S. Marcellæ*, c. 4.

[3] S. GREG. NAZIANZUS, *Orat. 27 in Laud S. Athan.* Compare NICEPHOR., lib. viii. c. 40.

and freedom.[1] From Rome the new institution, already distinguished by the name of *religion* or *religious life, par excellence*,[2] extended itself over all Italy. It was planted at the foot of the Alps by the influence of a great bishop, Eusebius of Vercelli, who had, like Athanasius, gloriously confessed the faith against the Arians, and who, exiled like him, had sought in the Thebaid the same models which the Bishop of Alexandria had revealed to Rome. It is thus that the Arian persecution, and the exile of the confessors of the faith, carried afar and fructified the monastic seed. The history of this time might be summed up in the celebrated phrase of Tertullian, thus modified: "Exilium confessorum semen monachorum." Returned to Italy, Eusebius gave the first example, often imitated since, and always with success, of confiding to monks the care of the worship in his cathedral.[3] From the continent the new institution rapidly gained the isles of the Mediterranean, and even the rugged rocks of the Gorgon and of Capraja, where the monks, voluntarily exiled from the world, went to take the place of the criminals and political victims whom the emperors had been accustomed to banish thither. The monks of the Gorgon might one day be seen embarking and hastening to meet the relics of St. Julia, a noble virgin of Carthage, brought into slavery by the Vandals of Genseric, and afterwards martyred by the pagans at Cape Corso, where her master, a Syrian merchant, had stopped to sacrifice. When they had possessed themselves of this treasure,

[1] "Romæ plura monasteria cognovi, in quibus singuli . . . cæteris secum viventibus præerant Christiana caritate, sanctitate, et libertate viventibus." —S. AUGUST., *De Moribus Ecclesiæ*, c. 33. "Multi monachi sapientes, potentes, nobiles."—S. HIERON., Epist. 26, *ad Pammach.*

[2] From that time the name of *religion* was given to the monastic institution, and to the monks that of *religious*. "Unus in religionis, alius in sacerdotii nomen ascendit."—EUCHER., *ad Valerian.*, ap. BULTEAU, *Hist. de l'Ordre de St. Benoît*, i. 46.

[3] "Primus in Occidentis partibus in eadem Ecclesia eosdem monachos instituit esse, quos clericos, ut esset in ipsis viris contemptus rerum et accuratio levitarum."—*Breviar. Romanum, die.* 16 *Decemb.*

they bore it away into their nest of rocks, flying over the waves with full sails, in their frail skiff, like birds of the sea.[1] The earth and the sea had to recognise new guests and new masters.

From that time, and during all the second half of the fourth century, there was a great and admirable movement towards spiritual and penitential life in Rome, and throughout Italy. The Spirit of God breathed upon souls. It was, above all, in the midst of the Roman nobility that the words of Athanasius fell like thunder, and inspired all hearts. These old patrician races, which founded Rome, which had governed her during all her period of splendour and liberty, and which overcame and conquered the world, had expiated for four centuries, under the atrocious yoke of the Cæsars, all that was most hard and selfish in the glory of their fathers. Cruelly humiliated, disgraced, and decimated during that long servitude, by the masters whom degenerate Rome had given herself, they found at last in Christian life, such as was practised by the monks, the dignity of sacrifice and the emancipation of the soul. These sons of the old Romans threw themselves into it with the magnanimous fire and persevering energy which had gained for their ancestors the empire of the world. "Formerly," says St. Jerome, "according to the testimony of the apostle, there were few rich, few noble, few powerful among the Christians. Now it is no longer so.[2] Not only among the Christians, but among the monks are to be found a multitude of the wise, the noble, and the rich."

They thus purified all that was too human in their wounded souls, by virtues unknown to their fathers—by humility, chastity, charity, scorn of self and tenderness for the

[1] "In modum volucrum. . . . Vela plenis iter suum agerent."—RUINART, *Hist. Persec. Vandal*, p. 221.

[2] "Tunc rari sapientes, potentes, nobiles *Christiani:* nunc multi *monachi* sapientes, potentes, nobiles."—S. HIERON., Epist. 24, *De Obit. Paulinæ.*

misery of others, the love of a crucified God, whose image and rights were recalled by the poor, the sick, and the slave. All these divine novelties came to revive in these great hearts the masculine traditions of austerity, of abnegation, of sobriety and disinterestedness, which had shone like an aureole around the cradle of their ancient splendour. The monastic institution offered them a field of battle where the struggles and victories of their ancestors could be renewed and surpassed for a loftier cause, and over enemies more redoubtable. The great men whose memory hovered still over degenerate Rome had contended only with men, and subjugated only their bodies: their descendants undertook to strive with devils, and to conquer souls.[1]

Even for their merely human glory, and the great names which crushed them by their weight, what better could the most superstitious votary of the worship of ancestors desire for them? Political power, temporal grandeur, aristocratic influence, were lost for ever amid the universal debasement. God called them to be the ancestors of a new people, gave them a new empire to found, and permitted them to bury and transfigure the glory of their forefathers in the bosom of the spiritual regeneration of the old world.

These great names, which had disappeared from history amid the debasement of the empire, reappear thus to throw forth a last ray which should never grow dim, by identifying themselves with the inextinguishable splendours of the new law.

The Roman nobility then brought into Rome, and reproduced there, a brilliant example of the marvels of the Thebaid. The vast and sumptuous villas of the senators and consuls were changed into houses of retirement, almost in every point conformed to monasteries, where the descendants of the Scipios, the Gracchi, the Marcelli, the Camilli, the Anicii, led in solitude a life of sacrifice and charity. The

[1] "Ille vicerunt corpora, . . . hæc subjugavit animas."—S. HIERON. Epist. 30.

bearers of these great names did not always shut themselves up in that retirement, but they dignified themselves with the title of monk, adopting the coarse dress, selling their goods, or bestowing them on the poor, lying down upon hard couches, fasting all their life, and keeping in the active ministrations of charity a rule as austere as that of the cloister.[1]

They were seen to mingle with the senatorial purple their mantle of coarse grey cloth, and to make plebeians of themselves in costume, trampling human respect under foot, which appeared then the most difficult of victories, for St. Jerome says, "Men have been known to resist torments, who yielded to shame. It is not a small thing for a man, noble, eloquent, and rich, to avoid in public places the society of the powerful, in order to mix among the crowd, to identify himself with the poor, to associate with peasants, and being a prince to make himself one of the people."[2]

But the metamorphosis which certain great ladies of Rome had undergone, was still more admirable. These women, hitherto so proud of their noble birth, and so refined in their delicacy, who, as St. Jerome says, could not proceed a step except carried in a litter by eunuchs, and who even then could not endure the inequalities of the ground which they had thus to traverse, who found the weight of a silken robe too heavy, and fled from the least ray of the sun as from a conflagration, are shortly to be seen devoting themselves to the hardest labours and the most repulsive cares.[3]

Among the great houses which exemplified this Christian

[1] CHAMPAGNY, *op. cit.*, § 5, p. 336.

[2] "Inter purpuras senatorum fulva tunica pullatus incederet . . . quare non est parvum virem nobilem, virum disertum, virum locupletum potentium in plateis vitare comitatum, miscere se turbis, adhærere pauperibus, rusticis copulari, de principe vulgum fieri!"—S. HIERON., Epist. 26, *ad Pammach.*

[3] "Quæ eunuchorum manibus portabantur, et inæquale solum molestius transcendebant; quibus serica vestis oneri erat et solis calor incendium." —*Ibid.*

transformation of the Roman nobility, the family Anicia, which reckoned its descent back to the best times of the republic, and which seems to have been the richest and most powerful in Rome at the end of the fourth century, should be specially distinguished. It reckoned then among its members the famous Anicius Petronius Probus, who was prefect of the prætorium—that is to say, the first personage in the empire after the emperor, and whose son, Petronius, was, according to some, a monk before he became Bishop of Bologna.[1] It afterwards produced the two greatest personages of monastic history, St. Benedict and St. Gregory the Great; and already the two most illustrious doctors of the West, St. Jerome and St. Augustine, vied in celebrating the glory of a race, in which every man seemed born a consul, yet which had given a still greater number of virgins to the Church than of consuls to the republic.[2]

Their enthusiasm had for its object a young nun of the same race, Demetrias, whose grandfather, brother, and two uncles were consuls from 371 to 406. After the conquest of Rome by the Goths, she took refuge in Africa with her mother Juliana and her grandmother Proba. While Proba

[1] MOEHLER, *op. cit.*, p. 194. The Bollandists say nothing of it.—T. ii., 4 Octobris, p. 424 *et seq.*

[2] "Quis verbis explicet . . . quam incomparabiliter gloriosas atque fructuosas habeat ex vestro sanguine feminas virgines Christus, quam viros consules mundus?"—S. AUGUSTIN, Epist. 179, *De Convers. Demetriadis.* "Illustris Anicii sanguinis genus, in quo aut nullus, aut rarus est qui non meruerit consulatum."—S. HIERON., Epist. *ad Demetriadem*, c. 2.

This same race has inspired the poet Claudian with the following verses:—

"Quemcumque requires
Hac de stirpe virum, certum est de consule nasci.
Per fasces numerantur avi semperque renata
Nobilitate virent, et prolem fata sequuntur,
Continuum simili servantia lege tenorem:
Nec quisquam procerum tentas, licet ære vetusto
Floreat, et claro cingatur Roma senatu,
Se jactare parem, sed prima sede relicta
Aucheniis, de jure licet certare secundo."
—*Paneg. de Prob. et Olybr. Consul.*

sought to unite her to one of the young Roman nobles who were their companions in exile, the virgin Demetrias, inspired by a recollection of St. Agnes, threw aside all her ornaments, clothed herself in a coarse tunic, and a veil still coarser which concealed her face, and threw herself, in that attire, at the feet of her grandmother, explaining herself only by tears. After the first moment of surprise, the mother and grandmother applauded the sacrifice. The whole Church in Africa was touched by it, and the two greatest writers of the time have immortalised her in their letters. St. Augustine congratulated her mother and grandmother by one of his most eloquent epistles.[1] St. Jerome, blessing the voluntary victim, compared the effect of this news to that of the days when a victorious consul raised the hopes of the republic when cast down by some disaster.

A young widow, Marcella, whose name alone is enough to recall the best days of the republic, and whose rare beauty, enhanced by the long and illustrious line of her ancestors, drew around her numerous suitors,[2] was the first to receive the narratives of St. Athanasius, and put his instructions into practice. Afterwards, when St. Jerome came to Rome to renew those instructions and narratives by adding to them the example of his own life, Marcella, with her mother Albinia, and her sister Asella, placed herself at the head of that select number of illustrious matrons who took him as their guide and oracle. She astonished the holy doctor by her knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, she fatigued him by her thirst always to know more of them than he could teach her; she made him afraid to find in her a judge rather than a disciple.[3] In her palace on

[1] *Epist.* 150.

[2] "Illustrem familiam, alti sanguinis decus, et stemmata per proconsules et præfectos prætorio decurrentia. . . . Propter ætatem et antiquitatem familiæ, et insignem, quod maxime viris placere consuevit, decorem corporis."—S. HIERON., Epist. 16, *ad Principiam*, c. 1.

[3] "Cum Romæ essem, nunquam tam festina me vidit, ut non de Scripturis aliquid interrogaret. . . . Sagaci mente universa pensabat, ut me

Mount Aventine, she collected, under the presidence of that giant of controversy, the most worthy among the Christians and the most pious among the noble ladies, for mutual strengthening and enlightenment. After having thus first given to Rome the true model of a Christian widow, she passed the last thirty years of her life in her suburban villa transformed into a monastery, and there, in the absence of Jerome, during the troublesome contests which took place between him and Rufinus upon the doctrines of Origen, she became the support of orthodoxy in Rome, the adviser and auxiliary of Pope Anastasius.[1]

About the same time a Roman lady of the first nobility, Furia, whose name indicates her descent from the great Camillus, being left a widow young and without children, addressed herself to Jerome to ask his advice upon her condition, in which she desired to remain, in opposition to her father and her relatives, who urged her to marry again. He drew out for her a rule of life which should make her widowhood an apprenticeship to monastic life.[2] And shortly after, in the year 400, he had to conduct in the same path the young Salvina, daughter of the king of Mauritania and widow of Hebridius, the nephew of the Emperor Theodosius, a great friend of the monks and the poor.[3] She became the model of widows at Rome and Constantinople.

But the most illustrious of all is that Paula whose mother was directly descended from Paulus Emilius and the younger Scipio, whose father professed to trace his genealogy up to Agamemnon, and whose husband was of the race of Julius, and consequently of the line of Æneas.[4] The noblest blood

sentirem non tam discipulam habere quam judicem."—S. HIERON., *Præf. in Epist. Paul. ad Galat.* "Ita ut post perfectionem nostram, si de aliquo testimonio Scripturarum esset oborta contentio, ad illam judicem pergeretur."—*Ibid.*, Epist. 16, *ad Princip.*, c. 7.

[1] S. HIERON. Compare BARONIUS, *Ann.*, ad. an. 397.

[2] FLEURY, lib. xix. c. 56.

[3] HIERON., Epist. *ad Salvinam.*

[4] "Gracchorum stirps, soboles Scipionum, Pauli hæres, cujus vocabulum

of Rome flowed in the veins of these holy women, immortalised in Christian history by the genius of St. Jerome. Who does not know these daughters of St. Paula—Blesilla the widow, who died so young, so amiable, so learned, and so penitent, after having been married to a descendant of Camillus—and Eustochia the virgin, whom Jerome honoured by dedicating to her the code of Christian virginity?[1] It is known that he afterwards addressed to Lœta, the stepdaughter of Paula, the first treatise on the education of women which the Christian spirit had inspired, and which prepared for cloistral life the young Paula, devoted to the Lord from the cradle, and a nun, like her grandmother and her aunt. He offered, with the candour of genius, to educate her himself, and, "old as I am," said he, "I shall accustom myself to infantine lispings, more honoured in this than Aristotle was, for I shall instruct, not a king of Macedonia destined to perish by the poison of Babylon, but a servant and spouse of Christ, to be presented to Him in the heavens."

Paulina, the third of the daughters of Paula, was married to Pammachius, himself as noble by his consular birth a was his wife. Becoming a widower, and heir of the great possessions of Paulina, he also embraced monastic life, and was worthy of being declared by Jerome the general-in-chief of Roman monks—"the first of monks in the first of cities."[2] "When he walks in the streets," adds the holy doctor, "he is accompanied by the poor whom Paulina had endowed and lodged in her house. He purifies his soul by contact with

trahit, Marciæ Papiriæ matris Africani vera et germana progenies. Per omnes fere Græcias usque hodie stemmatibus et divitiis ac nobilitate Agamemnonis ferunt sanguinem trahere. Toxotio qui Æneæ et Juliorum altissimum sanguinem trahit."—S. HIERON., Epist. 27, *ad Eustoch.*

[1] Epist. 22, *ad Eustochiam, de Custodia Virginitatis.*

[2] "Primus inter monachos in prima urbe, consulum pronepos et Furiani germinis decus. Et patris et conjugis nobilitate patritium. Nunc multi monachi sapientes, potentes, nobiles, quibus cunctis Pammachius meus sapientior, potentior, nobilior; magnus in magnis: primus in primis; *archistrategos* monachorum."—S. HIERON., Epist. *ad Pammach.*

their mean garments. . . . Who should have believed that a last descendant of the consuls, an ornament of the race of Camillus, could make up his mind to traverse the city in the black robe of a monk, and should not blush to appear thus clad in the midst of the senators? It is thus that he, ambitious of the celestial consulate, wins the suffrages of the poor by gifts more powerful than games or spectacles. An illustrious man, eloquent and rich, he descends from the highest rank of the state to be the companion of the Roman populace. But before giving himself to Jesus Christ, his name was known only in the senate; ignored when he was rich, it is blessed to-day in all the churches of the universe."

Pammachius, who thus consecrated his fortune and his days to the poor, was at once seconded and surpassed in his works of charity by a widow of a heart still more great than her name;[1] this was Fabiola, of that wonderful race of the Fabii, three hundred of whom fell in a single combat for Rome, and who saved the city by bestowing on her that great man against whom the arm of Hannibal could not prevail. Married to a frightful profligate, she had availed herself of the Roman law to repudiate him, and to unite herself to a more worthy husband: afterwards, enlightened by her faith, she expiated that fault by a public penitence in the Basilica of the Lateran, and consecrated her widowhood to a long and fruitful penance. She employed her immense wealth in the foundation of the first hospital which had yet been seen in Rome, where she collected the sick poor, gathered from the squares of the city, to serve and nourish them with her own hands, to bathe their sores and ulcers, from which others turned their eyes, to tend their diseased members, and to solace the agony of the dying.[2]

[1] See his Life by St. Jerome, Epist. 30, *ad Oceanum*.

[2] "Prima omnium *νοσοκομεῖον* instituit, in quo segrotantes colligeret de plateis, et consumpta languoribus atque inedia miserorum membra foveret. Quoties morbo regio et pædore confectos humeris suis ipsa portavit! quoties lavit purulentam vulnerum saniem, quam alius aspicere non valebat! Spirans cadaver sorbitiunculis irrigabat."—S. HIERON., *loc. cit.*

She did this with so much tenderness and maternal feeling, that the healthful poor wished for sickness that they might become her patients. Her maternal generosity extended from the poor to the monks. She was not content with providing for the necessities of all the cenobites of both sexes at Rome and throughout Latium; she went in her own person, or by her messengers, to relieve the poverty of the monasteries hidden in the bays of the Mediterranean, and even in the isles, wherever, indeed, choirs of monks raised their pure and plaintive voices to heaven.

Finally, in concert with Pammachius, and thus giving a prelude to one of the most permanent and universal glories of the monastic order, she built at the mouth of the Tiber [1] a hospice for the use of the pilgrims who already thronged to Rome; there she waited their arrival and departure, to lavish upon them her cares and her alms. The fame of her munificence soon resounded through all the Roman world: it was spoken of among the Britons, and remembered with gratitude in Egypt and in Persia.[2] At the approach of death, she convoked by writing a multitude of Religious to distribute to them all that remained of her wealth. When this woman, who was called the solace of the monks,[3] slept in the Lord, all Rome celebrated her obsequies; the chant of psalms and Alleluiahs rose everywhere: the squares, the porticoes, the roofs of the houses, could not contain the crowd of spectators. "I hear from this distance," wrote St. Jerome at Bethlehem, "the thronging footsteps of those who precede her bier, and the waves of the multitude which accompany it. No, Camillus did not triumph so gloriously over the Gauls, nor Papirius over the Samnites,

[1] At *Portu Romano*, now *Porto*, a ruined episcopal town, six miles from Ostia.

[2] "Xendochium imperio Romano suum totus pariter mundus audivit: sub una æstate didicit Britannia quod Ægyptus et Parthus noverant vere." —S. HIERON., *loc. cit.*

[3] "Solatium monachorum."—*Ibid.*

nor Scipio over Numantium, nor Pompey over Mithridates; the pomp of all these victors is not equal to the glory of this courageous penitent."[1] And he spoke with justice, for she had inaugurated in the world, between the disgrace of the Roman empire and the miseries of the Barbarian invasion, a glory unknown to the past; she had created that charity which gives more than bread, more than gold—the charity which gives the man himself—the charity of the monk and of the nun.

In the country of Lucretia and Portia, too long stained by the Livias and Messalinas, these Christian heroines completed Roman history and opened the annals of the monastic order; they bequeathed to it types of chastity, charity, and austerity, which nothing had then equalled, and which nothing has since surpassed. Monasteries of men and women multiplied around them in Rome, where each prepared himself by prayer, fasting, and abstinence, for the formidable crises of the future, and where the last scions of the old and invincible Romans waited the coming of the Barbarians. When Rome was taken and sacked for the first time by the Goths in 410, the soldiers of Alaric, penetrating into the eternal city, found Marcella calm and intrepid in her monastic palace on Mount Aventine, as the Gauls of Brennus eight centuries before had found the Roman senators waiting death in silence on their chairs of ivory, like gods, according to Livy. They demanded gold from that venerable mother of Roman monasteries; they refused to believe in the voluntary poverty which her coarse tunic attested; they struck her down with sticks and whips.[2] She submitted patiently to these outrages, but prostrated herself before the barbarians to ask mercy for the modesty

[1] "Audio præcedentium turmas. . . . Non sic Furius de Gallis, non Papirius de Samnitibus. . . . Favebant sibi omnes in gloria pœnitentis." —S. HIERON., *loc. cit.* Fabiola died in 399.

[2] "Marcellæ quoque domum cruentus victor ingreditur. . . . Intrepido vultu excepisse dicitur introgressos. . . . Cæsam fustibus flagellisque."—S. HIERON., Epist. 16, *ad Principiam.*

of the young nun [1] who was her companion. This was in a manner to attempt an impossibility; these ferocious beasts, as St. Jerome says, who periodically invaded the empire, delighted in taking as the playthings of their savage lust the delicate forms of noble Roman ladies, of free women and consecrated virgins. However, she triumphed by her prayers and tears over their licentiousness. These obscure barbarians renewed the sacrifice which has immortalised the younger Scipio; and Marcella, taking refuge with her whom she had saved at the tomb of St. Paul, died as if buried under that supreme and difficult victory.

All these holy and generous women have been revealed to us by the man of genius, who was their contemporary, their biographer, and their oracle. For forty years St. Jerome, first at Rome, then at Bethlehem, instructed, governed, inspired, and attracted them to the highest possessions. He admired them more, perhaps, than he had been admired by them, and he desired that posterity should share this admiration: he has succeeded by bequeathing to it these narratives, distinguished by his impetuous energy and ardent emotion, which the Church has adopted, and which form one of the finest pages of her annals.

Monastic history claims the glory of St. Jerome—of that lion of Christian polemics, at once inspired and subdued; inspired by zeal, and subdued by penitence. We must not attempt to retrace here all the life of this great doctor, who, born in Dalmatia,[2] carried successively to Rome, Gaul, and Constantinople, the almost savage impetuosity of his temper, the ardour of his faith, the indefatigable activity of his mind, the immense resources of his knowledge, and that inexhaustible vehemence, which sometimes degenerated into

[1] "Ne sustineret adolescentia quod senilis ætas timere non poterat." —S. HIERON, *loc. cit.* "Quot matronæ, quot virgines Dei et ingenua nobiliaque corpora his belluis fuere ludibrio!"—*Ibid.*, Epist. 35.

[2] According to some, in 331; to others, in 340 or 346. The last date appears the most correct. See the excellent *Histoire de S. Jérôme* by M. Collombet. Lyons, 1844.

emphasis and affectation, but which most frequently attained to true eloquence. That which specially interests us is the monk, the hermit, who, coming from the West, attempted to lead back the monastic current to its source in the East, and who would perhaps have succeeded in regenerating for long ages the monks of the East, if God had permitted him to instil into them the courage and energy which he had brought from the depths of his mountains. Drawn towards solitude by a passionate attraction, and by the desire for salvation which possessed him, he fled the vices and voluptuousness of Rome; he sought an asylum in Syria among the numerous anchorites who made that country the rival of monastic Egypt. He made a sort of citadel for himself in the burning desert of Chalcis, upon the confines of Arabia. There he buried himself in the study of Hebrew and Chaldean, and prepared himself to become the commentator and translator of the Holy Scriptures. He joined to this the cultivation of ancient literature, and of his favourite author Cicero, but so eagerly that he took fright and vowed to renounce it, under the impression of a remarkable dream, forgotten afterwards, as was also his rash engagement, to the great profit of his genius and our edification, for none has ever evoked more appropriately and majestically the great recollections of classic antiquity.[1] Other visions, still more menacing, troubled him in the midst of the prayers, the austerities, and the excessive fasts which he imposed upon himself for the love of his soul; he was pursued with

[1] He wrote a narrative of this dream, which he entitled *History of my Misfortune.* See COLLOMBET, i. c. 7, and ii. c. 1, on the subject of the classical studies of Jerome, which he did not hesitate to continue in spite of this warning, and for which he is reproached so severely by his antagonist Rufinus. He remembered his dream and promise so little, that he made the monks copy the dialogues of Cicero, explained Virgil at Bethlehem, and answered to the accusations of Rufinus, that, after all, this was only a question of a dream. "*He who upbraids me with a dream, I refer to the prophets, who teach that dreams are vain and not worthy of faith.*"—*Contr. Rufin.*, i. 30, quoted by OZANAM, *Civilisation au V^e Siècle*, i. 301, where this whole subject is fully discussed.

the remembrance of the delights of Rome, and of its choirs of young girls, who came to people his cell, and to make it an accomplice of his own burning imagination;[1] but soon the blessed influence of solitude, inhabited for God, triumphed over those apparitions of the past. He felt himself sufficiently strong, sufficiently reassured, to call to the end of his retirement a friend of his youth, whose salvation was dear to him. He cried to him across the seas, "O desert enamelled with the flowers of Christ! O solitude, where those stones are born of which, in the Apocalypse, is built the city of the Great King! O retreat which rejoicest in the friendship of God! What doest thou in the world, my brother, with thy soul greater than the world? How long wilt thou remain in the shadow of roofs, and in the smoky dungeon of cities? Believe me, I see here more of the light."[2]

After having enjoyed that light for five years, he was driven from his dear solitude by the calumnious accusations which his character as a man of the West excited around him. He took refuge successively in Jerusalem; at Antioch, where he was ordained priest, but on condition of not being attached to any church, and of continuing to live as a monk; in Constantinople, whither he was drawn by the fame of St. Gregory of Nazianzus; in Rome, where he was secretary to the great pope Damasus; and in Alexandria, from whence he went to visit the hermits of the Thebaid. Finally, in 385, he returned, not to leave it again, to the Holy Land, and settled at Bethlehem, where he built for himself a little monastery with a hospice for pilgrims.[3] There, in a poor and narrow cell, eager to receive the inspirations of faith

[1] "Ipsam quoque cellulam meam, quasi cogitationum mearum consciam, pertimescebam."—Epist. 22, *ad Eustochiam.*

[2] "O desertum floribus Christi vernans! . . . O domus familiarius Deo gaudens!"—Epist. 1, *ad Heliod.*

[3] "Apud Bethleem degens, ubi et monasterium ibi condidit."—MARCELLINI, *Chronic.*, an. 392. "Nos in ista provincia ædificato monasterio et diversorio propter exstructo."—Epist. 26, *ad Pammach.* He afterwards inhabited and ruled the monastery which St. Paula had built at Bethlehem.

near the manger of the Saviour, and faithful above all to the law of labour, which he regarded as the foundation of monastic life, this glorious cenobite accomplished the translation and commentary of the Scriptures. He produced thus that Vulgate which has made him "the master of Christian prose for all following ages."[1] He joined to that great work the education of some little children, whom he instructed in humane letters. He received there with hospitality the monks whom his renown drew from all the corners of the world, and who overwhelmed him by their visits,[2] and the remains of the Roman nobility who, ruined by the sack of Rome, fled to Bethlehem to seek food and shelter from him. He continued there the bold warfare which he had waged all his life against the errors and disorders with which he saw the Church infected, and which raised such violent enmities against him. A severe outbreak of this enmity came upon him towards the end of his days, when the Pelagians, to avenge his attacks against their chief who issued his dogmas at Jerusalem, came to besiege, plunder, and burn the communities directed by Jerome, who only escaped by taking refuge in a fortified tower.[3]

During his sojourn in Rome, he had spread the love for monastic life with as much zeal as success. At Bethlehem he continued that apostolic office, and led back from the bosom of Italy numerous and illustrious recruits, who gave their all for the benefit of the poor of Christ, and whom he enrolled in the monastic legions. He pursued strictly those who resisted or turned back at the last moment. He writes to Julian: "Thou hast given thy goods to many poor, but there are many more still to whom thou hast not given.

[1] OZANAM, *Civilisation au V^e^ Siècle*, ii. p. 100. See also his admirable 15th lesson, entitled *Comment la Langue Latine devint Chrétienne*, one of the finest passages of this masterpiece of our Catholic history.

[2] "Tantis de toto orbe confluentibus obruimur turbis monachorum."—Epist. 26, *ad Pammach.*

[3] S. AUGUST., *De Gestis Pelag.*

The riches of Crœsus would not suffice for the solacement of those who suffer. Thou protectest the monks, thou makest gifts to the churches, thou puttest thyself at the service of the saints: one thing only remains for thee to do: it is to change thy life, and henceforth to be a saint among the saints."[1]

But his admiration for monastic life did not blind him to the vices and abuses which already appeared among the cenobites. No one has denounced, no one has branded, more energetically than he, the false monks, the false penitents, the false widows and virgins. He points out with a bold hand all the faults and dangers of the institution: sometimes the black melancholy, degenerating into hypochondria, which followed an excess of reading or immoderate fasts, and which was more adapted to receive the help of medicine than the instructions of penitence;[2] sometimes the pomp and luxury which disguised themselves under the cloak of the solitary, without giving up the dainties of the table, the vessels of gold, and the delicate glass, the herd of boon-companions and attendants;[3] or, again, the hypocrisy which worked upon the credulous piety of nobles and of women;[4] but especially the pride, which emboldened so-called converts to judge their brothers who remained in the world, to disdain even the bishops, and to come out of their cells in order to wander about the towns, and annoy, under a false air of modesty, the passers-by in public places.[5]

This legitimate severity inspired him with all the more

[1] Epist. 34, *ad Julian.*

[2] "Vertuntur in melancholiam, et Hippocratis magis fomentis quam nostris monitis indigent."—Epist. 225 (al. 7), *ad Rusticum;* 130 (al. 8), *ad Demetriadem.*

[3] "Ex vitro et patella fictili aurum comeditur, et inter turbas et examina ministrorum nomen sibi vindicant solitarii."—Epist. 225 (al. 4), *ad Rusticum.*

[4] Epist. 18 (al. 22), *ad Eustochiam.*

[5] Epist. 15 (al. 77), *ad Marcum;* 95 (al. 4), *ad Rusticum.*

lively an admiration for the first great founders of monastic life, whose traditions he had collected, and whose atmosphere he had breathed in Egypt. He undertook to write the lives of some of the most illustrious—of Paul, of Hilarion, of the solitary Malchus, whom he had known and heard in Syria; he added to these the biographies of the illustrious Roman women who, a century later, had renewed even in the bosom of Rome marvels worthy of the Thebaid. "These are," said he, with a pride, in which the echo of warlike and literary ambition seems to resound—"these are our models and our leaders. Every profession has its models. Let the Roman generals imitate Regulus and Scipio; let the philosophers follow Pythagoras and Socrates; the poets, Homer; the orators, Lysias and the Gracchi: but for us, let our models and our chiefs be the Pauls and the Anthonys, the Hilarions and the Macarii."[1] Then, making a noble return upon himself, he terminates thus one of his finest narratives: "I conjure thee, whoever thou mayst be, who readest this, to remember the sinner Jerome, who would much rather choose, if God gave him the option, the tunic of Paul with his merits, than the purple and the empire of kings with their torments."[2]

Such lessons, supported by his glorious example, sufficed, and more than sufficed, to make that father of the West in his Eastern refuge the head and oracle of the cenobites of his time. Disciples therefore gathered round him in a crowd, and when he died an octogenarian, in 420, he could leave directions that he was to be buried beside the noble Paula[3] and her daughter Eustochia,[4] who had come to live and die

[1] "Habet unumquodque propositum principes suos. Romani duces imitentur Camillos, Fabricios, Regulos, Scipiones. Philosophi proponant sibi Pythagoram, Socratem, Platonem, Aristotelem; poetæ Homerum, etc.; oratores Lysiam, Gracchos; etc. Nos autem habeamus propositi nostri principes Paulos et Antonios, Julianos, Hilarionem, Macarios."

[2] "Tunicam Pauli cum meritis ejus, quam regum purpuram cum pœnis suis (*al.* cum regnis suis)."

[3] Died in 404.

[4] Died in 419.

near him and the humble sanctuary where the Saviour of men was born.

Jerome had been the leader of that permanent emigration which, during the last years of the fourth century, drew so many noble Romans and Christians of the West towards Palestine and Egypt. In proportion as souls were more penetrated with the truths of the faith, and gave themselves to the practice of Christian virtues, they experienced an attraction more and more irresistible towards the countries which were at once the cradle of the Christian religion and of monastic life. Then were seen beginning those pilgrimages which ended in the Crusades, which ceased only with the decline of faith, and which have been replaced by explorations too often inspired by the love of gain or by frivolous curiosity. Two great interests then moved the hearts of Christians, led them from their homes, and threw them into the midst of the difficulties, perils, and tediousness, now incomprehensible, of a journey to the East. They would kiss the footsteps of the Lord Jesus upon the very soil where He had encountered life and death for our salvation; they would also survey and see with their own eyes those deserts, caverns, and rocks, where still lived the men who seemed to reach nearest to Christ by their supernatural austerity, and their brave obedience to the most difficult precepts of the Saviour.

The illustrious Paula, still young, and attached to Italy by the most legitimate and tender ties, hastened to follow in the steps of St. Jerome,[1] in order to visit the solitude which the Pauls and Anthonys had sanctified.[2] She left her country, her family, even her children,[3] and, accompanied by her daughter Eustochia, crossed the Mediterranean, disem-

[1] Melania had preceded her in 372, but it is not apparent that the exhortations of Jerome had induced her to make this journey.

[2] "Ad eremum Paulorum atque Antoniorum pergere gestiebat."—Epist. 27, *ad Eustochiam.*

[3] "Nesciebat se matrem, ut Christi probaret ancillam."—*Ibid.*

barked in Syria, went over the Holy Land, and all the places named in Scripture, with an unwearied ardour: then descended into Egypt, and, penetrating into the desert of Nitria, into the cells of the holy hermits, she prostrated herself at their feet, consulted them, admired them, and withdrew with reluctance from these blessed regions to return into Palestine. She established herself in Bethlehem, and founded there two monasteries, one for men, which Jerome seems to have governed; the other, very numerous, for women, where she secluded herself with her daughter and a multitude of virgins of various conditions and countries. Both ended their days there, as also did the young Paula, who came to rejoin her grandmother and aunt, to live and die near the tomb of Jesus Christ, and thus to justify the tender solicitude with which St. Jerome had surrounded her cradle. The grandmother held there, as did her daughter, the office of sweeper and cook, and the care of the lamps,[1] which did not hinder them from taking up again with perseverance their former Greek and Hebrew studies. The Vulgate was undertaken by St. Jerome to satisfy the ardour of these two women, to enlighten their doubts and guide their researches. It was to them that he dedicated his work, and he took them for judges of the exactness of his labour.[2] In this convent study was imposed upon the nuns, and each had to learn every day a portion of the Holy Scripture. But more than study, more even than penitence, charity governed all the thoughts and actions of this generous Roman. She lavished her patrimony in alms: she never refused a poor person: Jerome himself felt obliged to reprove her for her prodigality, and preach to her a certain prudence.[3]

[1] "Vel lucernas concinnant, vel succendunt focum, pavimenta verrunt, mundant legumina . . . apponunt mensas, calices porrigunt effundunt cibos. . . ."—Epist. 26, *ad Pammach.*

[2] Epist. 92, *ad Paul. et Rust.* Compare OZANAM, ii. 101.

[3] "Fateor errorem meum; cum in largiendo esset propitior, arguebam. . . . Hoc habere voti, ut mendicans ipsa moreretur, ut unum nummum filiæ non dimitteret. . . ."—*Ibid.*

"I have but one desire," she answered him, with the same passion of charity which afterwards burned in St. Elizabeth; "it is to die a beggar, it is to leave not a mite to my daughter, and to be buried in a shroud which does not belong to me. If I am reduced to beg," she added, "I shall find many people who will give to me; but if the mendicant who begs from me obtains nothing and dies of want, who but me shall be answerable for his soul?" Accordingly, when she died, she left to her daughter not an obolus, says Jerome, but on the contrary a mass of debts, and, which was worse, an immense crowd of brothers and sisters whom it was difficult to feed, and whom it would have been impious to send away.[1] In reality, though she allowed herself to be advised and blamed for her exorbitant almsgiving, she knew well that he would understand her, who had stripped himself of all, and who afterwards sent his brother Paulinian into his own country, into Dalmatia, to sell the possessions of the family there, and make as much money of them as he could, in order to relieve the poverty to which the monasteries of Bethlehem were reduced.

However, it is pleasant to know that these austere Christians, these Romans so boldly courageous against themselves, preserved in their hearts an abundant vein of tenderness, and attached themselves with ardour to those ties which they believed it possible to retain in giving themselves to God. Maternal and filial love still overflowed their intrepid hearts. At the funeral of Blesilla her eldest daughter, Paula could not restrain her grief, and fell fainting: her life was supposed in danger. Jerome, in an eloquent letter, had to use all his authority to lead her to resignation to the will of the Most High, showing her that the excess of her grief was a scandal in the eyes of the pagans, a dishonour to the Church and the monastic condition. When Paula died, twenty years later, in

[1] "Ne unum quidem hominum, sed . . . fratrum et sororum immensam multitudinem, quos sustentare arduum et abjicere impium est."

her convent of Bethlehem, Eustochia, after having lavished the most minute and indefatigable cares upon her during her last illness, hastened from her mother's deathbed to the grotto where the Saviour was born, to obtain of God, by tears and prayers, that He would permit her to die at the same time, and be buried in the same coffin. Then, as they bore that holy woman to her tomb, she threw herself upon the body of her mother, kissing her eyes, clasping her in her arms, and crying out that she would be interred with her.[1] Once more St. Jerome had to repress that weakness, and separate the orphan nun from the holy remains, to place them in the tomb which he had hollowed out of a rock beside the grotto of the Nativity, and upon which he carved these words: "Here reposes the daughter of the Scipios, and of Paulus Emilius, the descendant of the Gracchi and of Agamemnon, Paula, the first of the Roman senate; she left her family and Rome her country, her fortune and her children, to live poor at Bethlehem, near Thy cradle, O Christ! where the Magi honoured in Thee the man and the God."[2]

The noble Fabiola, whose liberality towards the poor in Rome we have already recorded, had also come to Jerusalem and to Bethlehem, and was there with St. Jerome and St. Paula. But she did not remain there. The fear of the invasion of the Huns recalled her to Rome. Marcella, who survived all these holy women, although their elder both in age and conversion, had not yielded to the eloquent tender-

[1] "Ipsa flabellum tenere . . . pulvillum supponere, fricare pedes, aquam calidam temperare . . . omnium ancillarum prævenire officia. . . . Quibus precibus . . . inter jacentem matrem et specum Domini discurrit . . . ut eodem feretro portaretur. . . . Quasi ablactata super matrem suam, abstrahi a parente non potuit; deosculari oculos . . . et se cum matre velle sepeliri."—HIERON., Epist. 27, *ad Eustoch.*

[2] "Scipio quam genuit, Pauli fudere parentes,
Gracchorum soboles. . . .
Romani prima senatus,
Pauperiem Christi et Bethlemica rura secuta est. . . ."
—*Ibid.*

ness of the appeal which Jerome addressed to her[1] in the name of Paula and her daughter. "Leave," they said to her, "that Rome where everything is adverse to the vocation and peace of a nun. Here, on the contrary, in this country of Christ, all is simplicity, all is silence. Wherever you go, the husbandman, leaning on his plough, murmurs the praises of God; the reaper refreshes himself by the chant of psalms, and the vintager, in cutting his vine, repeats the songs of David. These are the love-songs of this country, the melodies of the shepherd, the accompaniment of the labourer."[2]

But, about the same period, another woman, illustrious and holy, issued from another branch of the family of Marcellus. Melania the elder, daughter of a consul, mother of a prætor, celebrated in all the Church for her shining virtue and devotion to the monks, became the stem of a numerous line of holy souls, belonging at once to the monastic life and to the first nobility of Rome.[3] Under her direction another monastic colony rose at Jerusalem, rivalling by its devotion and charity that which Jerome and Paula directed at Bethlehem.

Left a widow at twenty-two, having lost in the space of a year her husband and two of her sons, and having only one little child, whom she confided to Christian hands, Melania left Rome and sailed towards Egypt, to console her grief and warm her faith by the marvellous spectacle of the life led by the solitaries, who seemed already to live with the angels. It was in 372, the last year of the life of St. Athanasius.[4] Melania, at her landing, saw the

[1] After the death of her mother Albina, about 388.

[2] Translation of M. VILLEMAIN, *Tableau de l'Eloquence Chrétienne au* IV^e^ *Siècle.*

[3] "Melania nobilissima Romanorum mulier."—S. HIERONYM., *Chron.* Compare ROSWEYDE, *Not. in Prælud.* lib. ii. *Vit. Patrum.* Melania, born at soonest in 347 (ROSWEYDE, p. 441), was, according to St. Paulinus, granddaughter of Marcellinus, consul in 341; according to St. Jerome, she was his daughter.

[4] This was also the year of St. Jerome's first pilgrimage into Egypt.—ROSWEYDE, *Prælud.* in lib. ii.

great bishop of Alexandria, and received from his hands a relic of the Thebaid, a sheepskin which he himself had received from the holy abbot Macarius. She penetrated afterwards into the desert of Nitria and of Scete, and passed nearly six months in receiving the lessons and studying the austerities of the solitaries who dwelt there. The bishop Palladius and the priest Rufinus, who met her there, have left to us the most fascinating narrative of her pilgrimages in these holy solitudes.[1] At the death of Athanasius, the Arians, sure of the support of the Emperor Valens, raised against the orthodox one of the most atrocious persecutions which history has recorded. The monks, as has been already said, were its principal victims. Melania, who had already braved the interdict of the emperor by landing in Egypt,[2] put her life and her fortune at the service of the confessors of the true doctrine. She concealed some from the search of the executioners; she encouraged others to appear before the tribunal of the persecuting magistrates, where she accompanied them, where she was herself cited as a rebel against the divine emperor, but where her courage triumphed over the confounded judges. For three days she provided, at her own expense, for the five thousand monks whom she found in Nitria.[3] A great number of orthodox bishops and monks having been banished to Palestine, she followed them; and this noble woman might be seen in the evening, disguised under the coarse mantle of a servant,[4] carrying to the prisoners the assistance they needed. The consular magistrate of Palestine, not knowing who she was, arrested her in the hope of a great ransom. Upon this she resumed all the pride of her race, and invoked,

[1] *De Vitis Patrum*, lib. ii., auct. RUFIN., Aquileiensi presbyt., et lib. viii., auct. PALLAD., Helenopol. episc.

[2] PALLADIUS, *op. cit.*, p. 772.

[3] "Tempore Valentis, quando Ecclesiam Dei vivi furor Arianorum, rege ipso impietatis satellite."—S. PAULIN., Epist. 10; ROSWEYDE, pp. 427, 442.

[4] "Induta servili caracalla."—PALLAD., *loc. cit.*, 773.

like St. Paul, her rights as a Roman. "I am," she said to him, "the daughter of a consul; I have been the wife of a man illustrious in his generation;—now I am the servant of Christ. Despise me not because of my mean dress, for I can attain a higher rank if I will; and I have sufficient credit to keep me from fearing you, and to hinder you from touching my goods. But lest you should do wrong by ignorance, I have thought it right to let you know who I am." And she added, "We must know how to make head against fools, setting our pride against their insolence, as we loose a hound or a falcon against the deer."[1] The terrified magistrate offered excuses and homage,[2] and left her all liberty to communicate with the exiles.

Piety retained her in the Holy Land, whither she had been drawn by her generous sympathy for the defenders of the faith. She established herself at Jerusalem, and built a monastery there, where she collected fifty virgins. For twenty-five[3] years she devoted to the relief of the poor, and the entertainment of the bishops, monks, and pilgrims of every condition, who came in multitudes to these holy places, her own services, and the revenues which her son sent to her from Rome. She was guided and seconded by the celebrated priest Rufinus, who inhabited a cell on the Mount of Olives, and who was at that period the old and tender friend of Jerome. A dispute afterwards took place between Rufinus and Jerome, occasioned by the doctrines of Origen: their rupture long agitated the Church, and drew from them melancholy invectives against each other. Melania

[1] "Quænam sim tibi declaravi. Oportet enim adversus stolidos, tanquam cane et accipitre uti animi elatione."—PALLAD., *loc. cit.*, 773.

[2] "Adoravit eam."—*Ibid.*

[3] Palladius says for *thirty-seven years*, but this number seems to us difficult to reconcile with the latter events in the life of Melania, at least under the supposition that she returned to live at Jerusalem between her journey to Rome in 397 with Rufinus, and her last departure from that city with Melania the younger in 409.

succeeded in bringing about a public and solemn reconciliation between them, but it was not lasting.[1]

In the meantime, the only son whom Melania had left in Rome, and who had become prætor, had married Albina, the sister of Volusian, prefect of the city, one of the most noble personages of the time. He had one daughter, named Melania, like her grandmother, who had been married at a very early age to Pinianus, the son of a governor of Italy and Africa, and descendant of Valerius Publicola, the great consul of the first year of the Roman republic. But the inclination of this young woman drew her rather towards penitent and solitary life than to the pomps of Roman decadence. Melania the elder, desirous of aiding her to walk courageously in the way of salvation, left Jerusalem to join her in Rome. She landed at Naples, in the end of the year 398, and immediately there came to meet her, with her children, a crowd of Roman senators and nobles, who made the Appian Way resound with their luxurious carriages, their caparisoned horses, and gilded chariots. She rode amongst them, mounted upon a sorry horse, of no more value than an ass,[2] and clothed with a coarse tunic of rushes, woven like a mat. She added by this manifest humility to the great reputation which she enjoyed everywhere.

She stopped at Nola to visit a saint who was her relative and emulator. Paulinus,[3] born at Bordeaux, counted among his ancestors a long succession of senators; he had himself been consul under the Emperor Gratianus; his wealth was

[1] An examination into the accusations of heresy brought against Rufinus, and consequently against the illustrious Melania, may be dispensed with. Father Rosweyde has entered into them with a violence which does not seem to have been approved by the most trustworthy historians.

[2] "Macro et viliore asellis burrico . . . circumflui senatores . . . carrucis nutantibus, phaleratis equis, auratis pilentis et carpentis pluribus, gemente Appia atque fulgente . . . Crassam illam veluti spartei staminis tunicam."—S. PAULIN., Epist. 29 (al. 10).

[3] Born in 353, consul in 378, bishop of Nola in 409, died in 431. See the charming passage in which Ozanam depicts the life and works of Paulinus in his *Civilisation au* V^e *Siècle*, lesson xviii.

immense; he was a friend of the poet Ausonius, and himself a poet; he had married a very rich Spaniard, who was the first to bear the predestined name of Theresa. The husband and wife had mutually excited and drawn each other towards retirement and mortification. Ausonius endeavoured in vain to retain his friend in the world, and to put him in opposition to his wife. From year to year their life became more rigid; they retired to a little estate near Barcelona; there they lost their only son. Then Paulinus lived with his wife as with a sister, left the senate and the world, solemnly changed his dress in the Church of Barcelona, distributed all his wealth to the poor, and buried himself in a small inheritance which he had reserved at Nola in Campania, near the tomb of the martyr Felix, of which he constituted himself the guardian. This Roman consul, who had become the watchman of the relics of a martyr,[1] lived as poorly with his Theresa as the poorest and most austere monks; but he continued, according to the advice of St. Jerome, to cultivate eloquence and poetry, consecrating them to sacred subjects, and also his former friendship. "The last moment," wrote he to Ausonius, "which shall free me from this earth, shall not take away the tenderness I have for thee; for this soul which survives our destroyed organs, and sustains itself by its celestial origin, must needs preserve its affections, as it keeps its existence. Full of life and of memory, it can no more forget than it can die."[2] Many Christians joined him, and inhabited cells adjoining his, so that they formed a company of monks, subject to a rule of their own.

Melania bestowed upon Paulinus and Theresa a portion of the wood of the true cross, which she had from the Bishop of Jerusalem, and then pursued her route towards Rome, where she was received with universal respect and admiration. She remained there several years, always occupied in extending among her own family and around her the love

[1] ROHRBACHER, *Hist. de l'Eglise*, lib. xxxvii. p. 334.
[2] S. PAULIN., *Carmina*, x. 18.

of monastic life, exhorting all who approached her to leave the world, to sell their goods, and follow her into solitude. She first won the husband of her niece, Apronianus, a patrician of the rank of *clarissimus*, who was still a pagan; she converted him not only to the Christian faith, but to monastic life, and his wife Avita at the same time. She confirmed her grand-daughter, Melania the younger, already the mother of two children whom she had lost, and still only twenty, in the resolution of keeping continence with her husband.

The Barbarians, who year by year closed around Rome their circle of fire and sword, and who shortly were to scale the sacred walls, could now be heard approaching. These presentiments of the ruin of the empire seconded and completed the work and exhortations of the illustrious nun. She urged her relatives and fellow-citizens to throw their wealth into the lap of God and the poor, rather than leave it a prey to the rapacity of the Barbarians. At last, in 409, a year before the conquest of Rome by Alaric, all that holy and noble tribe began their march towards the desert. But in the first place the younger Melania, heiress of so many opulent lines, enfranchised her eight thousand slaves, and distributed to the churches, to the hospitals, to the monasteries, and to the poor, all the vast domains which she possessed in Spain and in Aquitaine, in the Tarraconaise, among the Gauls; she reserved to herself those in Campania, Sicily, and Africa, only to serve for future liberalities. She then sent immense sums even to Palestine and the Thebaid by the hands of a Dalmatian priest. It was so much saved from the enemy, so much snatched from the claws of the barbarian lion.[1] Afterwards they embarked. Melania the elder, who led this triumph of the new faith at the moment when antique Rome was falling, drew with her all her descendants, her son Publicola, her daughter Albina,

[1] "Ex ore leonis Alarici eripiens fide sua."—PALLAD., *Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 19.

her grand-daughter Melania the younger, with Pinianus her husband, and a multitude of others. They went first to Sicily, and from thence to Africa, where St. Augustine awaited them.

Melania the elder, after having seen the death of her son, and wept for him as a Christian mother should weep,[1] left the rest of her family to return to her convent at Jerusalem, where she died forty days after her return.

Melania the younger became then, in a manner, the head of the monastic caravan. From Carthage, where they had landed, they came to Tagaste, where Alypius, the celebrated friend of St. Augustine, was bishop; and from Tagaste to Hippo, where Augustine himself received them with tender and respectful cordiality. The people of that town, who were accustomed to impose vocations, and who had thus won St. Augustine, desired to seize the husband of Melania to ordain him a priest by force, in the hope of winning thus to their church and their poor the wealth which the husband and wife distributed with profusion. There was a complete riot on this account, of which St. Augustine has left us the record, and which he could not appease, although he threatened the rioters that he would cease to be their bishop if they persisted in using violence to the stranger. The multitude would only be calmed by a promise that if Pinianus ever consented to enter among the clergy, it should only be in the church of Hippo.[2] Going back to Tagaste, Melania and Pinianus founded two monasteries, the one of eighty monks, the other of a hundred and thirty nuns; they lived there seven years in extreme poverty. Melania gained her living by transcribing manuscripts, which she did with equal skill and rapidity,[3] while her husband cultivated a garden. Afterwards they went together to Egypt to honour

[1] "Taciturno quidem luctu, non tamen sicco a maternis lacrymis dolore."—S. PAULIN., ap. *August.*, Epist. 249.

[2] S. AUGUST., Epist. 225.

[3] "Scribebat et celeriter et pulchre, citra errorem."

and succour with their alms the solitaries of Nitria and its environs. At last they arrived at Jerusalem, and there separated. Pinianus, the former prefect of Rome, pursued his occupation of gardener in company with thirty other monks.[1] Melania, who had not yet attained the age of thirty, became a recluse in a cell upon the Mount of Olives, where she remained fourteen years; she afterwards built a church and monastery for ninety penitents, upon one of the sites where our Lord rested when bearing His cross.

These holy consorts, in ending their career[2] near the Holy Sepulchre, found there the memory of their grandmother, Melania the elder, with the always warlike zeal and exalted fame of St. Jerome. They could bask in the last rays of that great light. In the last epistle which he wrote and addressed to St. Augustine, Jerome speaks of them and calls them his children, his in common with the Bishop of Hippo.[3]

It is thus that this choir of holy women, noble widows, and generous patrician ladies, of whom Marcella, Paula, and Melania are the leaders,[4] transmitted the line of monastic virtue and traditions from St. Athanasius to St. Augustine, through St. Jerome. The greatest names of the Church—of the East as well as of the West—have thus a part in the development of the cenobitical institution. We would fain linger over them, and enjoy their glory at length and in detail. But we must hasten our steps, and pass on to names more obscure and ages less known: we shall find there the grandeur which is inalienable from truth and virtue.

[1] PALLAD., *Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 121.

[2] They went to Jerusalem in 417. Albina died there in 433, Pinianus in 435, Melania the younger in 439 or 440. In the last years of her life she undertook a journey to Constantinople to convert her uncle Volusien. She struggled there against the Nestorians, and determined the Empress Eudoxia to come on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

[3] "Sancti filii communes . . . plurimum vos salutant."—S. HIERON., Epist. 79.

[4] Among them we must also point out that Demetrias, grand-daughter of Petronius, of the family Anicia, of whom we have spoken above.

It would be a serious mistake to suppose that these heroic women, during their lifetime, encountered everywhere the admiration and sympathy which Christian posterity has given them; or that so much self-devotion, and so many generous sacrifices, could be accomplished without exciting a warm and powerful opposition from all the pagan elements, still so numerous and tenacious, which remained in Roman society. Among many Christians, the repugnances of our poor nature, always infirm and always jealous of every pure and superior force, were joined to the persevering animosity of pagan instincts. Our holy heroines had to be constantly in the breach, occupied in braving the entreaties, the importunities, and even the injurious words of their relatives, and of all in the nobility who were averse to sacrifices so great. They were often reproached with robbing their children of their patrimony, or with abandoning them at an age when the maternal cares were a sacred duty. But the great examples of abnegation, poverty, and humility, which they offered to all classes of their fellow-citizens, excited special exasperation. It was not only, as a historian says, "the male and female animals of the senatorial order"[1] who were furious against these superhuman virtues; the popular masses also burst forth in opposition. This was clearly apparent at the funeral of Blesilla, the eldest daughter of Paula, in 384, when the Christian people of Rome collected in the streets, crying aloud, "This young woman has been killed by fasts. . . . When shall this detestable race of monks be expelled from the city? Why are they not stoned? Why not thrown into the Tiber?" Then, making maternal grief itself a weapon against all that the mother and daughter had most loved here below, the same accusers proceeded, showing Paula in tears, overwhelmed under the

[1] "Spoliabat filios et inter objurgantes propinquos."—S. HIERON., *Vit. S. Paulæ.* "Sic depugnavit adversus bestias, nempe eos qui erant ordinis senatorii, et eorum uxores, prohibentes eam renuntiare reliquis suis sedibus." —*Vit. Melaniæ, in Hist. Lausiaca*, c. 118.

weight of her affliction: "Behold," said they, "how they have seduced this unhappy matron: for a sufficient proof how little she desired to be a *monkess*, never woman among the heathen has wept thus for her children."[1]

The same sentiments as those of the plebeians at Rome were also found at Carthage, which had then become Roman and Christian, but was lost in all the excesses and refinements of corruption. Salvian informs us that when men in cloaks, pallid, and with shaven heads, were seen to appear in the cities of Africa, and especially in Carthage, coming from the monasteries of Egypt or the holy places of Jerusalem, the people scourged them with maledictions, hootings, and hisses,[2] and hunted them through the streets like pernicious beasts.

And even when the popular masses had ended by yielding to the sway of these great examples, a large number of people still continued to entertain feelings of contempt and rage towards the monks, especially amongst the literary class; and vigorous traces of this are to be found in the poems of Rutilius Numatianus. This Poitevin writer had long lived at Rome. He returned into his own country in 416, some years after the striking conversions which the Melanias, the Paulas, and the Marcellas had worked upon the Roman nobility; he has described the emotions of his voyage in a poem which is still in existence. Crossing the Mediterranean, he came in front of the isles and rock which were inhabited by patricians lately converted: "Behold," says he, "Capraja rises before us; that isle is full of wretches, enemies of light; they draw from the Greek their name of *monks*, because they would live without witnesses. Fear of the evils of fortune has made them dread its gifts. They make themselves poor in anticipation, lest

[1] S. HIERON., Epist. 22 (al. 25), *ad Paulam*.

[2] "Palliatum et pallidum et . . . usque ad cutem tonsum. . . . Improbissimis cachinnis et detestantibus videntium sibilis quasi taureis cædebatur."—*De Gubernat. Dei*, viii.

one day they should become so: was there ever seen folly so perverse?" And further: "I see the Gorgon raise herself among the waves opposite the coast of Pisa; I detest these rocks, scene of a recent shipwreck. There one of my fellow-citizens has lost himself, descending alive into the tomb. He was recently one of us; he was young, of great birth, rich, well married. But, impelled by the furies, he has fled from men and gods, and now, credulous exile, lies decaying in a foul retreat. The unhappy one! he expects to feed upon celestial good in the midst of filth, more cruel to himself than the gods whom he offends should have been. Is not this sect more fatal than the poisons of Circe? Circe transformed only the bodies, but these transform the souls." [1]

This last adherent of paganism saw clearly: it was the souls which transformed themselves. From thence came the irremediable ruin of his gods, and the victory of the ideas and institutions which he pursued with his impotent malice.

The complaints and invectives of the pagan poets and rhetoricians came too late. The monks, who had found

[1] "Processu pelagi jam se Capraria tollit.
Squalet lucifugis insula plena viris.
Ipsi se monachos Graio cognomine dicunt,
Quod soli nullo vivere teste volunt.
Munera fortunæ metuunt, dum damna verentur.
Quisquam sponte miser, ne miser esse queat?
Quænam perversi rabies tam stulta cerebri,
Dum mala formides, nec bona posse pati?
Sive suas repetunt ex fato ergastula pœnas;
Tristia seu nigro viscera felle tument . . .
Aversor scopulos, damni monumenta recentis:
Perditus hic vivo funere civis erat.
Noster enim nuper, juvenis majoribus amplis,
Nec censu inferior conjugiove minor.
Impulsus furiis homines divosque reliquit
Et turpem latebram credulus exsul agit . . .
Num rogo deterior Circæis secta venenis?
Tunc mutabantur corpora, nunc animi."
—RUTILIUS NUMATIANUS, lib. i. v. 439-515.

apologists and models in the greatest doctors of the Eastern Church—Athanasius, Basil, and Chrysostom—were no less supported in the West, where they could invoke the example of Jerome, and where they had won to their cause the irresistible influence of Ambrose and of Augustine.

Bishop Ambrose celebrated with love those very isles of the Mediterranean, peopled with monks, from the sight of which the poet Rutilius had turned with disgust. "It is there," said he, "in these isles thrown by God like a collar of pearls upon the sea, that those who would escape from the charms of dissipation find refuge: there they fly from the world, they live in austere moderation, they escape the ambushes of this life. The sea offers them as it were a veil, and a secret asylum to their mortifications. She helps them to win and defend perfect continence. There everything excites austere thoughts. Nothing there disturbs their peace: all access is closed to the wild passions of the world. The mysterious sound of the waves mingles with the chant of hymns; and while the waters break upon the shore of these happy islands with a gentle murmur, the peaceful accents of the choir of the elect ascend towards heaven from their bosom."[1]

Ambrose was that great man, eloquent and courageous, to whose cradle, as to Plato's, came a hive of bees, to leave upon the lips of the predestined infant the presage of a persuasive and irresistible eloquence. He had been the victorious advocate of Christianity against the plaintive pleading of Symmachus in favour of the altar of Victory, the last effort of official paganism. He had defended the rights of orthodoxy against the violence of Justina the Arian empress, and those of humanity and justice against the Emperor Theodosius, bathed in the blood of Thessalonica.

[1] "Quid enumerem insulas, quas velut monilia plerumque prætexit, . . . ut cum undarum leniter alluentium sono certent cantus psallentium, plaudant insulæ tranquillo sanctorum choro, hymnis sanctorum personent?"—S. AMBROS., *Hexameron*, iii. 5.

Such a pontiff could not ignore the vital importance of the monastic institution, to the faith of which he was so intrepid and eloquent a champion. Accordingly we find he supported at the gates of his episcopal city a monastery full of excellent monks.[1] He was unwilling that converts should be frightened by requirements above their strength. "Let us," said he, "leave those to flutter like sparrows who cannot soar like eagles."[2] But he seemed to be especially interested in the religious vocation of women. At the request of his sister Marcellina, who was a nun in Rome, he collected in three books, entitled *The Virgins*, the sermons which he had delivered in honour of monastic virginity. Nothing could be more eloquent than the opening of the third book, where Ambrose, carried back by memory to the day when this dear sister took the veil at Rome, in the church of the Apostles, at Christmas, hears and repeats the exhortation of the pope Liberius to the young novice. He did not fail to point out the dangers with which conventual life was surrounded in the splendour of Roman patrician society; and yet his words were so persuasive that the Milanese ladies shut up their daughters, lest, by hearing his sermons, they should be led too early into monastic life. He afterwards wrote a treatise *On Virginity*, which drew upon him the reproach of having denied the sanctity of marriage, and of preaching doctrines which, if put in practice, would condemn the human race to extinction. To these accusations, which have been renewed from age to age, the Bishop of Milan answered, as the defenders of Christian sacrifice have always responded—"How!" said he, "these virgins shall be free to choose a husband, and they shall not have the liberty of fixing their choice upon a God! . . . It is

[1] "Erat monasterium plenum bonis fratribus extra urbis mœnia, Ambrosio nutritore."—S. AUGUST., *Conf.* viii. 6.

[2] "Qui non potest volitare ut aquila, volitet ut passer."—*De Fuga Seculi*, c. 5.

complained that the human race will fail. I ask, who has ever sought a wife without finding one? The number of men is greater in those places where virginity is most esteemed. Inform yourselves how many virgins the Church of Alexandria and those of Africa and the East are accustomed to consecrate to God every year. There are more of them than there are men in Milan."[1]

Elsewhere in that triumphant response to Symmachus, which breathes the ardour and force of a belief victorious by the energy of virtue alone, when he has struck dumb the pompous rhetoric of these sons of the persecutors, who demanded the re-establishment of the altar of Victory in the midst of the senate, and who claimed the right of making bequests in favour of the vestals, he contrasts the sight already presented by the Christian monasteries with that of these vestals, who, despite the honours still showered upon them, and the easy devotion of a temporary vow, were so few in number. "You can bring together only seven, and that with difficulty; yes, despite the bandeaux, the diadems, and the purple with which you adorn them, notwithstanding the pompous litters, the numerous escort of servants, the privileges and immense profits which you offer them, these are all you can enrol in the service of chastity. But raise your eyes and your souls. See elsewhere this nation of innocents, this multitude of pure souls, this assembly of virgins; their heads are not ornamented by jewelled bands, they have but a coarse veil ennobled by its use. They do not seek, they cast aside everything which heightens beauty; they have neither purple nor luxury, no privileges, no profit, no delicacies, nothing, in short, but duties which reanimate their virtues."[2]

[1] *De Virginitate*, c. 5, 6, 7.

[2] "Vix septem vestales capiuntur puellæ. Est totus numerus . . . videant plebem pudoris, populum integritatis, concilium virginitatis. Non vittæ capiti decus, sed ignobile velamen."—*Epist. Cl.* i. 18, t. ii. p. 836, ed. Bened. The translation is partly by M. Villemain.

Ambrose, whose renown reached even the Barbarians, converting the Queen of the Marcomans, and drawing from the depths of Mauritania virgins who came to Milan to receive the veil from his hands,[1] was considered the principal doctor of the Latin Church till Augustine appeared.

It was at Milan, and in 385, the same year in which St. Jerome left Rome for the second and last time, to plunge again into the solitude of Bethlehem, that the inspired language of Ambrose, and the sight of this life entirely devoted to the service of God and our neighbour, began to open the eyes of the young Augustine. It was there, a year later, that a revelation of what was passing in souls drawn by the Spirit of God towards monastic life, burst upon him with a light which he no longer desired to resist. At nineteen he had been filled with contempt for the baseness of the contemporary world, and inspired by a noble enthusiasm for the good and the beautiful, for intellectual struggles, and the attainment of wisdom, by reading the *Hortensius* of Cicero. But a day came in which he learned that there is something greater than knowledge, and a purer enthusiasm than that of eloquence or philosophy. What the genius of Cicero had done for his mind, the life of Anthony, related by Athanasius, did for his soul. We have already mentioned that Athanasius had written a life of St. Anthony, in which

[1] The veil was already the distinctive mark of virgins consecrated to God. St. Ambrose explains at length the meaning of that custom.—*De Virginit.*, lib. iii. c. 1. St. Jerome says expressly that, in the monasteries of Syria and Egypt, all who dedicated themselves to God had their hair cut by the mothers of the monasteries, and covered their heads with a black veil.—*Letters*, vol. v. pp. 169, 385, ed. Collombet. St. Augustine, in his rule for nuns, forbids them to wear veils so flowing that their hair or head-dress might be seen. However, the veil was regarded by many of the Fathers as obligatory for all maidens, and even for wives who respected themselves. Tertullian, addressing the Christian women of his time on this subject, quotes the example of the pagan women of Arabia, who, like the Orientals of our days, concealed their faces, with the exception of one eye. "Indicabunt vos Arabiæ feminæ ethnicæ, quæ non caput sed faciem quoque ita totam tegunt, ut *uno oculo liberato*, contentæ sint dimidiam frui lucem, quam totam faciem prostituere."—*De Virgin. Veland.*, c. 16.

he summed up the marvels of the Thebaid, and which spread through all the West, like the glory of the illustrious fugitive who was its author. Let us leave Augustine himself to relate how it reached as far as Trèves, originating in the very heart of the imperial court monastic vocations, the narratives of which were destined to produce other conquests of grace. This immortal page of the *Confessions* belongs essentially to monastic history: it shows, by the testimony of the greatest man of the time, that action of the Thebaid upon the West, of which the holy patriarch of Alexandria, exiled in Gaul and Italy, had been the providential instrument. It offers, besides, the most eloquent and exact picture ever traced of those struggles of the soul, from which have proceeded, both before and after Augustine, all those conversions which have filled monasteries and heaven.

Augustine was at Milan, where he lectured on eloquence with his friend Alypius, when he received a visit from one of his African countrymen, Potitianus, one of the first military officers of the palace, and already a Christian. "We seated ourselves," says Augustine, "to talk, when he happened to notice a book which lay upon a card-table before us. He opened it; it was the Apostle Paul. . . . I confessed to him that reading this was my principal study. He was then led by the conversation to speak to us of Anthony, the monk of Egypt, whose name, so glorious among Thy servants, was unknown to us. He perceived this, and confined himself to that subject; he revealed this great man to our ignorance, which astonished him exceedingly. We were in a stupor of admiration to hear of these unquestionable marvels, which were so recent, almost contemporary, worked in the true faith, in the Catholic Church. And we were mutually surprised, we to learn, and he to teach us, these extraordinary facts. And from thence his discourse flowed upon the holy flocks of the monasteries, and the perfumes of virtue which exhaled from them towards their Lord, over those fertile wastes of the desert, of which we

knew nothing. And even at Milan, outside the walls, was a cloister full of good brothers, trained under the wing of Ambrose, and we were ignorant of it.

"He continued to speak, and we listened in silence; and he told us how one day, at Trèves, when the emperor was spending the afternoon at the spectacles of the circus, he and three of his companions went to walk in the gardens close by the walls of the town; and as they walked two-and-two, one with him, and the two others together, they separated. The two latter entered a cabin on their way, where lived some of these voluntary poor who are Thy servants—these poor in spirit who shall inherit the kingdom of heaven—and there they found a manuscript of the life of Anthony. One of them began to read it; he admired it, his heart burned, and as he read the thought rose of embracing such a life, and leaving the warfare of the age to serve Thee: they were both in the service of the emperor. Suddenly filled with a divine love and holy shame, he grew angry against himself, and casting his eyes on his friend, 'Tell me, I pray thee, whither all our labours tend? What do we seek? For whom do we carry arms? What can be our greatest hope in the palace but to be friends of the emperor? And how frail is that fortune! what perils! and how many perils before reaching the greatest peril! Besides, when shall that be attained? But if I desire to be a friend of God, I am so, and instantly.'

"He spoke thus, all shaken by the birth of his new life, and then, his eyes returning to the holy pages, he read: his heart changed to Thy sight, and his mind freed itself from the world, as was soon after apparent. He read, and the waves of his soul flowed trembling; he saw and overcame, and he was already Thine, when he said from his soul, 'It is done, I break with all our hope; I will serve God, and now, in this place, I begin the work. If thou wilt not follow me, deter me not.' The other answered that he also would win his share of the glory and spoil. And both,

already Thy servants, built the tower which is raised with that which is lost by following Thee.

"Potitianus and his companion, after having walked in another part of the garden, reached this retreat, seeking them, and warned them that it was time to return, because the day fell. But they, declaring their design, how this resolution had come to them and established itself in their minds, entreated their friends not to oppose their determination, if they refused to share it. The latter, not feeling any change of heart, nevertheless wept over themselves, said Potitianus. They piously congratulated their comrades, recommending themselves to their prayers. Then they returned to the palace, their hearts still drawn towards the earth; and the others, their hearts still aspiring towards heaven, remained in the cabin. Both had betrothed brides, who, on hearing this, consecrated to Thee their virginity."

Augustine continues: one never wearies of quoting him. "I devoured myself inwardly: I was penetrated with confusion and shame while Potitianus spoke. He went away. And then what did I not say to myself? In that violent disturbance of the inner world, where I pursued my soul to the most secret stronghold of my heart, with a face troubled like my spirit, I seized Alypius, and cried out, 'What then are we doing? how is this? what hast thou been hearing? These ignorant men rise; they take heaven by force; and we, with our heartless sciences, behold us wallowing in the flesh and in our blood! Is it shameful to follow them, and are we not rather disgraced by not following them?' He was silent in surprise, and looked at me, for my accent was changed; and my forehead, my cheeks, my eyes, the colour of my face, disclosed my mind much more than the words that escaped me. Our house had a little garden. . . . The tempest of my heart led me there. . . . Alypius followed me step by step; for I was alone even in his presence. We seated ourselves as far off as possible from the house. I trembled in my soul, and excited myself into the most

violent indignation that I still could not yield myself to Thy will, to Thy alliance, O my God, to which all the powers of my soul urged me, crying: Courage! . . . But these vanities of vanities, my ancient mistresses, shook me by my robe of flesh, and whispered to me, 'Dost thou send us away? What! from this moment shall we be no more with thee for ever? And from this moment, this very moment, shall this be no longer permitted to thee, and for ever?' . . . They attacked me no more in front, quarrelsome and bold, but by timid whisperings murmured over my shoulder, by furtive attacks, they solicited a glance. . . . The violence of habit said to me, Canst thou live without them? But already even this spoke with a languishing voice. For on the side to which I turned my face, and which I feared to pass, the chaste majesty of continence disclosed herself. . . . She stretched out to receive and embrace me, her hands full of good examples; children, young girls, youth in abundance, all ages, venerable widows, women grown old in virginity, and continence was not barren in these holy souls: she produced generations of celestial joys, which she owed, O Lord! to Thy conjugal love. And she seemed to say to me with a sweet and encouraging irony: What! canst not thou do a thing which is possible to these children, to these women?

"Then a frightful storm arose in my heart, charged with a rain of tears. To give them entire vent, I rose and withdrew from Alypius. I threw myself on the ground under a fig-tree, and gave full course to my tears, . . . and I addressed Thee, not in these terms, but with this meaning: 'O Lord, how long wilt Thou be angry against me? Remember not my past iniquities.' For I felt that they held me still. And I allowed these pitiful words to escape me. 'When? what day? to-morrow? after to-morrow? wherefore not at this instant? why should not I make an end at once with my shame?' And all at once I heard proceeding from a neighbouring house like the voice of a child or of a

young girl, which sang and repeated these words: 'Take, read! take, read!' I stayed my tears, and saw in that a divine command to open the book of the Apostle, and to read the first chapter that came. I knew that Anthony, coming in one day while the Gospel was being read, had taken, as addressed to himself, these words: 'Go, sell that which thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me;' and that such an oracle had immediately converted him to Thee. I returned quickly to the place where Alypius was seated; for on rising I had left the book of the Apostle. I took it, opened it, and read in silence the first chapter on which I cast my eyes. 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' I would not, I had no occasion, to read further. Scarcely had I completed these lines, when, as if a light of assurance had spread over my soul, the darkness of doubt disappeared."[1]

The remainder of the tale, and how the immortal son of Monica became a Christian, then a priest, then a bishop, and in short the greatest doctor of his times, and, perhaps, of all ages, is well known.

But it is not sufficiently known, that from his return to Africa, if he was not, properly speaking, a monk,[2] he lived according to the rules of monastic life.

[1] S. AUGUSTIN, *Confessions*, lib. viii. c. 6 to 12, from the translation of M. Louis Moreau, with some improvements borrowed from M. Villemain.

[2] The question whether Augustine was or was not a monk, has been long and very unprofitably debated. He had evidently the same right to the name as St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, and all the other Fathers whose condition is not disputed. Thomassin (part I., lib. iii. c. iii. 9) maintains that Augustine was never a monk, but only the founder of a congregation of clerks, bound by a vow of continence and charity. It is not easy to perceive the difference, looking at the period in which the saint lived, prior to much of the more recent and precise regulation of

When only a priest, he formed at Hippo a monastery, where he lived in evangelical poverty.[1] On his promotion to the episcopate, being no less desirous to continue the life in common with the servants of God which he had led since his conversion, he founded a second community composed of the clergy of his episcopal see,[2] in the midst of which he ended his career, and which became a nursery of bishops. When accused by the Donatist Petilian of having introduced a novelty into the Church by inventing monastic life, he answered that if the name of monastery is new, the manner of life followed by the monks, founded upon the example of the apostles and first Christians, is as ancient as the Church.[3]

The monastic institution, then, can claim the glory of him who has been declared the greatest and most celebrated of theologians,[4] the father and master of all preachers of the Holy Gospel,[5] and who takes his place between Plato and Bossuet, between Cicero and St. Thomas d'Aquinas, in the first rank of those rare minds who soar over time. This man, great in thought as in faith, in genius as in virtue, and born to exercise over his own time and all times the most legitimate sway, received his final training from the exercises and austerities of cloistral life. Doubtless all is not perfect in the remains he has left to us: the subtilty, obscurity, and bad taste of an age of literary decay, are to be found there. But who has ever excelled him in the extent, the variety, and inexhaustible fertility of his labours,

monastic character. On the other side, M. Collombet points out a tract of Ferrand, parliamentary advocate, entitled *Discours où l'on fait voir que St. Augustin a été Moine.* Paris, 1689.

[1] "Quia hoc disponebam in monasterio esse cum fratribus, . . . cœpi boni propositi fratres colligere, compares meos, nihil habentes, sicut nihil habebam, et imitantes me."—*Sermo* 355, ed. Gaume, vol. ii.

[2] "Et ideo volui habere in ista domo episcopii mecum monasterium clericorum."—*Ibid.*

[3] *Contra Litt. Pet.*, lib. iii. c. 40.

[4] BOSSUET, Letter of October 1693.

[5] The same, Sermon for the Ceremony of taking the Vows.

the profound sensibility and charming candour of his soul, the ardent curiosity, the elevation and expansion of his mind? Two great productions stand forth from the mass of his innumerable works, and will last as long as Catholic truth: the *Confessions*, in which repentance and humility have involuntarily clothed themselves in the sublime robes of genius, and which have made the inner life of Augustine the patrimony of all Christians; and the *City of God*, which is at once a triumphant defence of Christianity, and the first essay at the true philosophy of history, which Bossuet alone was destined to surpass. His life, consumed and devoured by an inextinguishable thirst for goodness, is but a long combat, first against the learned follies and shameful vices of the Manicheans; then against the culpable exaggerations of the Donatists, who pushed their sanguinary rigorism the length of schism rather than submit to the wise indulgence of Rome; again in opposition to the Pelagians, who claimed for human liberty the right of doing without God; finally and always, against the remnants of paganism, which struggled in Africa with all the old obstinacy of Carthage against the new and victorious religion of Rome. He died at seventy-six, upon the walls of his episcopal city, besieged by the Vandals, a living image of that Church which rose between the Roman empire and the Barbarian world to protect the ruin and purify the conquest.

The ardour of controversy was always tempered in this holy soul by tender charity. "Slay error," he said, "but always love the man who errs."[1] Let us also quote this passage against the Manicheans, which is worthy of being reckoned among the noblest effusions of Catholic faith, and of which those forgetful neophytes who constitute themselves the avengers of truth should be perpetually reminded:—

"Let those persecute you, who know not with what labour the truth is found, nor how difficult it is to avoid

[1] 'Interficite errores, diligite homines."

error. Let those persecute who do not know how rare and hard it is to vanquish, even with all the serenity of a pious soul, the attractions of the flesh; who do not know what efforts are necessary to heal the eye of the inner man, that he may look at his sun. . . . Let those persecute you who are ignorant by what sighs and groans a knowledge of God is attained, and how imperfect it is even then. In fine, let those persecute who have never yielded to the error in which they see you involved. As for me who, long and cruelly tossed to and fro, have at last seen the pure truth, . . . me who, to dissipate the darkness of my mind, have been so slow to submit to the merciful physician who called and caressed me; me who have wept so long that God might deign to reveal Himself to my soul; me who of old sought with eagerness, listened with attention, believed with rashness, who have endeavoured to persuade others, and to defend with obstinacy those dreams in which you are held enchained by habit; as for me, I can be severe upon you in nothing, but ought to bear with you now as I bore with myself at a former time,[1] and treat you with the same patience which my neighbour showed towards me, when, furious and blind, I struggled in your error."

At a later period, it is true, he supposed he had been mistaken in refusing to employ any other means than those of persuasion against the heretics.[2] He asked or accepted the aid of the sword of the Cæsars, still red with the blood of Christians sacrificed to false gods, and of orthodox

[1] "Illi in vos sæviant qui nesciunt cum quo labore verum inveniatur. . . . Ego autem, qui diu multumque jactatus tamdem respicere potui . . . sævire in vos omnino non possum," &c.—*Contra Epistolam Manichæi*, c. 2 and 3, vol. viii. p. 267, ed. Gaume. Let us add to this admirable passage a word from the most eloquent monk of our own days:—"The converted man who has no pity, is, in my eyes, a vile creature. He is the centurion who, instead of beating his breast on recognising the Christ, becomes executioner."—FATHER LACORDAIRE, *Lettre du 14 Septembre 1853*.

[2] *Epist.* 93 and 185, vol. ii. pp. 343 and 965.

believers immolated to Arianism. But this was always accompanied by a protest against the infliction of capital punishment, or any other cruel penalty, upon the votaries of error. He found these incompatible with Catholic gentleness; and entreated the imperial clemency not to stain the memorial of the agonies of the servants of God, ever glorified in the Church, with the blood of an enemy.[1] Moreover, between these two opinions we are free to choose, for imitation and admiration, that which is most completely in accordance with his genius and his heart, as with the true glory and strength of the Church.

But we cannot here expatiate upon St. Augustine. We must return to that which concerns exclusively his connection with the monastic order. He gave it first of all his example, by living, as has been seen, from the time of his conversion, as a cenobite with other cenobites, and in imitation of the monks whose customs he had studied at Rome.[2] He was especially careful to secure the strict observance of monastic poverty by himself and the brethren of his episcopal monastery. This law of personal disinterestedness based upon a community of goods, was an urgent necessity in such a country as Africa, where the thirst for gold and luxury was universal, and where friends and enemies watched with a jealous eye the progress of clerical wealth. Augustine took, therefore, great pains in rendering account to his people of the employment of the modest patrimony on which his community was supported, and of his unceasing refusal of donations and legacies to augment it, when their source did not appear to him completely pure. "Let him," said he, "who would disinherit his son to endow the Church, seek whom he will to accept

[1] "Pœna sane illorum, quamvis de tantis sceleribus confessorum, rogo te ut præter supplicium mortis sit, et propter conscientiam nostram et propter catholicam mansuetudinem commendandam . . . ne passiones servorum Dei, quæ debent esse in Ecclesiæ gloriosæ, inimicorum sanguine dehonestentur."—*Epist.* 139, vol. ii. p. 625.

[2] *De Moribus Eccl. Cathol.*, c. 33.

his bequest: it shall not be Augustine. Still more, if God pleases, no man shall accept it."

Such an example, seconded by such a genius, could not remain barren: and Augustine is justly regarded as having introduced the monastic order for both sexes into the Church of Africa, in the midst of that incredible corruption which surpassed that of all the rest of the world, and of which Salvian has left us too faithful a picture.[1] Not only did numerous monasteries multiply upon African soil, according to the wish manifested by Augustine,[2] on lands and gardens given up for that purpose by the great proprietors of the country; but the secular clergy themselves seem to have imitated, in many quarters, the model offered to them by the Bishop of Hippo and the brethren who lived under his roof, and also by that of his friend Alypius, now become Bishop of Tagaste.[3] He had besides founded in Hippo a monastery of women, of which he made his own sister superior. It was to calm the dissensions which had arisen there, and to prevent all disorder in future, that Augustine drew out the famous *Rule* which bears his name. Written in 423, divided into twenty-four articles, and originally destined for these simple African nuns, it was resuscitated under Charlemagne, as we shall see further on, and became then the fundamental code of an immense branch of the monastic order. It has served as the basis of a multitude of congregations, and principally of the canons-regular who have borne up to our days the name of St. Augustine. Eight centuries after the ruin of ancient Rome and the invasion of the Barbarians, when St. Dominic desired to create in the midst of the triumphant Church a new army to ward off new dangers, he did not hesitate to

[1] *De Gubernat. Dei*, lib. vii. and viii.

[2] "Propositum tam bonum, tam sanctum, quod in Christi nomine cupimus, sicut, per alias terras, sic per totam Africam pullulare."—*De Opere Monachorum*, c. 28.

[3] *Epist. Paulin. ad Alyp.*, in *Op. Aug.*, t. ii. p. 51.

adopt for its rule the constitution which the greatest of the Fathers of the Church had given to the modest convent of his sister.[1]

Thus, without suspecting it, not content with reigning over his contemporaries and posterity by his genius and doctrine, Augustine enriched the domains of the Church with an institution which, after fourteen centuries, still remains fruitful and glorious in many of its branches.

But even in his lifetime he rendered to the Church and the monastic order a more direct and not less remarkable service. Such is the lamentable infirmity of human things, that progress in goodness is always accompanied by a corresponding recrudescence of original corruption. It disguises itself under a thousand devices and novel forms, but it always reappears in order the better to establish the merit and freedom of Christian devotedness. The abuses of the monastic order had risen amidst the primitive fervour of the institution. They displayed themselves forcibly in the general depravity of Africa, at the very period when Augustine carried there the first-fruits of his zeal and austerity. The monasteries were filled with a certain number of men escaped from the hard obligations of rural and municipal life, such as were endured under the last emperors of the West, who came there to seek and practise indolence. Still more, a set of hypocritical and sluggish monks was formed, called the *Massalians*, who wandered through the country and the towns begging, selling or displaying relics and amulets.[2] They preached against labour, appealing to that text, "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better

[1] A list of the numerous congregations and military orders which followed the rule of St. Augustine, may be seen in the *Histoire des Ordres Religieux*, by P. HELYOT. It fills the second and third volumes of that great work, edition of 1714-15.

[2] "Alii membra martyrum, si tamen martyrum, venditant: alii fimbrias et phylacteria sua magnificant."—*De Opere Monachorum*, c. 28.

than they?" And in order to be more like the birds, who do not divest themselves of their plumage, they allowed their hair to grow—the reverse of the regular monks, for the complete tonsure was already a kind of consecrated custom. From thence arose scandals and disorders. The Bishop of Carthage, whose diocese was especially troubled with them, entreated his colleague of Hippo to put down these impostors. Augustine did it in a celebrated essay, entitled *De Opere Monachorum*, which remains to us as an exposition of the motives of that law of labour which has been the glory and strength of the monks, and also as an unchangeable sentence pronounced beforehand against the laxness of after ages.

Some curious details as to the manner by which monasteries at that period recruited their ranks are to be found here. "Sometimes slaves," says he, "sometimes freedmen of old standing, or men enfranchised by their masters on purpose that they may become monks, are seen arriving to embrace the religious profession; these peasants, labourers, and plebeians, have passed an apprenticeship rude enough to render them apt in their new condition. To refuse them would be a crime, for many of them have already given great examples of virtue."[1] He would then have these applicants admitted even although the motive which led them was doubtful, whether it was to serve God, or only to flee from a hard and indigent life, to be fed, clothed, and even honoured by those who had been accustomed to disdain and oppress them.[2] But he would have them, above all, rigorously constrained to labour. Contrasted with these plebeians, he quotes the example of patricians, whose conversion at the same time edified all the Church, and who

[1] "Nunc veniunt plerique . . . ex professione servili, vel etiam liberti, vel propter hoc a dominis liberati seu liberandi, et a vita rusticana et ab opificum exercitatione et plebeio labore, . . . qui si non admittantur, grave delictum est."—*De Opere Monachorum*, c. 22.

[2] "Neque apparet utrum . . . an pasci atque vestiri voluerint, et insuper honorari ab eis a quibus contemni conterique consueverant."—*Ibid.*

watered with their sweat the monastic gardens. "It is not right," says he, "that mere workmen should be idle where senators are seen to labour; nor that peasants should be fastidious, where the lords of vast patrimonies come to sacrifice their wealth."[1] He also combats the apologists of religious idleness by the example and words of St. Paul, who passed his life making tents by the labour of his hands. To those who pretended to do away with labour in order to sing the praises of God, he answered that they could very well sing and work, as the boatmen and labourers often did.[2] He ended by sighing for the regulated and moderate work of the monks who divided their day between manual labour, reading, and prayer, whilst it fell to his lot to consume his life in the painful and tumultuous perplexities of the episcopate, then complicated by the settlement and arbitration of a multitude of temporal affairs.

Thus, after having had for their defender the greatest of the Fathers of the East, St. John Chrysostom, the monks had the honour of finding a legislator and reformer in the most illustrious and eloquent of the Fathers of the West. Both consecrated their genius to defend and regulate an institution which appeared more and more necessary to the Church and Christendom.

Before leaving Africa let us refer to another holy monk, illustrious by his eloquence and writings, a bishop like Augustine, and like Athanasius exiled for the faith. St. Fulgentius, the abbot of an African monastery, inspired by reading the life of the Fathers of the desert, went to the Thebaid to live as a solitary. But Egypt, torn by schisms and heresies, and already given up to the spirit of death, had, at the end of the fifth century, only rare intervals of light and fervour. Fulgentius had to content himself with

[1] "Nullo modo decet in hac vita ubi sunt senatores laboriosi, sint artifices otiosi, et quo veniunt relictis divitiis qui fuerunt prædiorum domini, ibi sint rustici delicati."—*De Opere Monachorum*, c. 25.

[2] *Ibid.*, c. 17.

extending the monastic institution in Sardinia, whither he was exiled by a Vandal and Arian king, and of consolidating it by his best efforts in Africa, where the Church, at one time so flourishing with its seven hundred bishoprics, was soon to sink during the struggle waged against a decrepit and corrupt civilisation by the fury of the Vandals, that ferocious nation which was the terrible precursor of the terrible Islam.

The persecution of the Vandals drove back the cenobitical institution from Africa to Spain: we shall speak hereafter of its obscure and uncertain beginnings in the Iberian Peninsula.

But in the first place let us return to Gaul, which has been too long passed over in this rapid review of the origin of the monastic institution in the West, and which was about to become the promised land of monastic life. Here again we find Athanasius, and the fertile seed which that glorious exile had spread through the world. Exiled to Trèves by Constantine in 336, he inspired all the clergy of the Gauls [1] with his ardour for the Nicene faith, and for the noble life of the solitaries of the Thebaid. The narrative of St. Augustine has showed what effect the history of St. Anthony, written by St. Athanasius, and found by them at Trèves, produced upon some officers of the imperial court. This event demonstrates the sudden power with which that enthusiasm for monastic life extended itself in the midst of the dissolute, impoverished, and saddened existence of the Roman empire, at the gates of which the Barbarians already struck redoubted blows.[2] From Trèves, which was its cradle in the West, the new institution, aided by the influence of the writings of Athanasius, spread rapidly through Gaul, where it had the singular fortune of being first established by the greatest and most lastingly popular man of the Gallican Church. That man was St. Martin, Bishop of Tours.

Born in Pannonia of a pagan father, a tribune of the

[1] Athanasius was three times in Gaul, in 336, 346, and 349.

[2] OZANAM, *De la Civilisation Chrétienne au V^e Siècle.*

imperial army, the young Martin, at the age of ten, made his escape from his father's house to give himself to Christ, and to be educated by the priests, with the intention of becoming a monk like the hermits of Egypt and the East, whose fame had already travelled to the banks of the Danube. But it was in vain: in his capacity as son of a veteran, the laws of the empire obliged him to serve in the army. Servitude existed everywhere in this imperial world. His own father betrayed him. At fifteen Martin was seized, bound, and enrolled by force in the cavalry, which he could not leave till he had made twenty campaigns! He lived with the frugality and austerity of a monk, although he was still only a catechumen,[1] and it was during this long and cruel novitiate that his miraculous meeting occurred at Amiens with that poor man to whom he gave the half of his cloak, and who has made his fame so popular. Delivered at last, "this veteran of the Roman army, educated in camps for the Church,"[2] sought in Christendom for a bishop under whose wing he could find shelter for the rest of his days. His choice was fixed upon St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers.[3] There was none more illustrious in the Church. He vied with Athanasius in defending the divinity of Jesus, and, inaccessible like him to seductions and violence, resisted victoriously, as he did, every effort of the imperial power in favour of heresy. Both had the same fate. The Patriarch of Alexandria had scarcely returned from the exile which had sent him from the Nile to the Rhine, when the illustrious doctor of Poitiers was banished for the same cause into the depths of Asia Minor. Aided by the immense extent of the empire, despotism did not hesitate to cast a confessor of the faith from one extremity of the world to the other; but these

[1] "Animus tamen aut circa monasteria aut circa Ecclesiam semper intentus. . . . Raptus et catenatus . . . ita ut non miles, sed monachus putaretur."—SULP. SEVER., *Hist. d. Mart.*, c. I.

[2] VILLEMAIN.

[3] Born in 300, died in 367 or 368.

caprices of blind force remained powerless, and the arm of the persecutor only served to throw afar the seed of truth and the example of courage.

Hilary received the old soldier with joy, conferred minor orders upon him against his will, and then sent him to Pannonia to convert his mother. The Arians, everywhere implacable and all-powerful, soon expelled him from his own country, at the same time as the holy Bishop of Poitiers was on his way to exile. Martin would not return to Gaul without his friend; he stopped at Milan in a monastery,[1] and then went on to the almost desert isle of Gallinara, in sight of the coast of Genoa, where he lived on roots to prepare himself the better for monastic life.

The triumphant return of Hilary in 360 led him back to Poitiers, and it was at the gates of this town that Martin then founded, with the concurrence of the bishop, that monastery of Ligugé which history designates as the most ancient in Gaul.[2] His youthful ambition was satisfied: all his trials, all his crosses were surmounted: behold him a monk! But soon a pious fraud drew him from his cloister to raise him to the metropolitan see of Tours. In vain he struggled against the hand of God, which refused repose and obscurity to him. From that moment, during his whole life, as after his death, the Christian universe was filled with the fame of his sanctity and miracles.[3]

He was, in the first place, the most dreaded enemy of all the remnants of paganism which existed among the Gauls. We see him, accompanied by his monks, going over the

[1] "Mediolani sibi monasterium constituit."—SULP. SEVER., *Vit. S. Martini*, c. 4.

[2] Many previous examples are, however, quoted, such as that monastery of the Isle Barbe, which offered an asylum to the Christians of Lyon during the persecution of Severus; but this priority is not certainly established.—Compare MABILLON, *Præfat. in. sæc.* iii. *Benedict.*, and the learned Notice of M. Cousseau, Bishop of Angoulême, inserted in the Memoirs of the Society of Antiquaries of the West.

[3] BOSSUET, *Hist. Universelle.*

country, casting down the Druidical monuments and oaks consecrated by the ancient national worship of the Gauls, and, at the same time, the temples and statues of the Roman gods; victors and vanquished together yielded to the new conqueror. However, the rural population defended their altars and venerable trees with a desperation which went so far as to threaten the life of Martin. But he braved their rage with as much resolution as he put forth in contending with demons; for in the midst of his apostolic journeys, like Anthony in the depths of the Thebaid, the great bishop was assailed by frightful phantoms, which took the form of the gods whose altars he had broken, appearing to him in the shape of Jupiter or Mercury, oftener still of Venus or Minerva, and making the air resound with their clamours and reproaches.[1]

But God had specially chosen him, as well as St. Hilary, to save Gaul from that contagion of Arianism which infected at once Romans and Barbarians. The two bishops opened the glorious annals of the Gallican Church by the noblest personification of dignity and charity. Martin was called to Trèves, where he retraced the steps of St. Athanasius, and was destined to meet with St. Ambrose. The Emperor Maximus held his court there, amid the abject adulation of a crowd of bishops, who enthralled the dignity of the priesthood to imperial favouritism. "Alone among them all," says his biographer, "Martin preserved the dignity of an apostle."[2] He did still more for the honour of his name and his faith by protesting against the intervention of secular power in ecclesiastical causes, and against the punishment

[1] "Diabolus. . . . Interdum in Jovis personam, plerumque Mercurii, persæpe etiam se Veneris ac Minervæ transfiguratum vultibus offerebat. . . . Audiebantur etiam plerumque convicia, quibus illum turba dæmonum protervis vocibus increpabat."—SULP. SEVER., c. 24.

[2] "Cum ad imperatorem . . . plures . . . episcopi convenissent, et fœda circa principem omnium adulatio notaretur, seque degeneri inconstantia regiæ clientelæ sacerdotalis dignitas subdidisset, in solo Martino apostolica auctoritas permanebat."—*Ibid.*, c. 23.

of the heretic Priscillian and his associates. The Emperor Maximus had yielded to the importunities of the Spanish bishops, who, themselves scarcely escaped from the sword of pagan executioners, already demanded the blood of heretics. Martin pursued the accusers with his reproaches, and the emperor with his supplications. He insisted that excommunication, pronounced against the heretics by episcopal sentence, was sufficient, and more than sufficient, to punish them.[1] He believed that he had succeeded, and left Trèves only on receiving the imperial promise that mercy should be extended to the culprits.

But, after his departure, the unworthy bishops returned to the charge, and wrested from Maximus the order to execute Priscillian and his principal disciples.[2] Informed of this detestable judgment, Martin returned from Tours to Trèves, to procure the safety, at least, of the rest of the sect. But he had solemnly rejected the communion of persecuting bishops;[3] and he only consented to remove the brand with which the public reprobation of so holy a bishop marked his colleagues, on perceiving that this was the sole means of saving the lives of the Priscillianists who remained to be murdered in Spain,[4] where, however, the death of their chief, who was henceforward regarded as a martyr, far from extinguishing his heresy, served only to strengthen and extend it.[5] Still he reproached himself

[1] "Satis superque sufficere, ut episcopali sententia hæretici judicati ecclesiis pellerentur."—SULP. SEVER., *Hist. Sacr.*, lib. ii. *in fin.*

[2] "Imperator per Magnum et Rufum episcopos depravatus. . . . Hoc, modo homines luce indignissimi, pessimo exemplo necati."—*Ibid.* "Depravatus consiliis sacerdotum."—*Dial.* 4, *De Vit. S. Martini.*

[3] St. Ambrose, who was also at Trèves at this period, withdrew equally from the communion of the bishops who pursued the Priscillianists to death.

[4] "Illa præcipua cura, ne tribuni cum jure gladiorum ad Hispanias mitterentur: pia enim erat sollicitudo Martino, ut non solum Christianos qui sub illa erant occasione vexandi, sed ipsos etiam hæreticos liberaret."—SULP., *Dialog.*, *loc. cit.*

[5] "Priscilliano occiso, non solum non repressa est hæresis, . . . sed confirmata latus propagata est."—SULP. SEVER., *loc. cit.*

greatly with this concession; he declared with tears that he felt his virtue lessened by it. During the sixteen remaining years of his life he kept back from all the assemblies of bishops, fearful of meeting those whom he regarded as guilty of a crime and unheard-of novelty in the annals of the Church.[1] He thus kept the noble promise which his master, St. Hilary, had made when, denouncing to the Emperor Constantius the atrocious cruelties of the Arians against the Catholics, he added, "If such violence was employed to sustain the true faith the wisdom of the bishops should oppose it; they should say, God will not have a forced homage. What need has He of a profession of faith produced by violence? We must not attempt to deceive Him; He must be sought with simplicity, served by charity, honoured and gained by the honest exercise of our free will."[2] And the glorious confessor added: "Woe to the times when the divine faith stands in need of earthly power; when the name of Christ, despoiled of its virtue, is reduced to serve as a pretext and reproach to ambition; when the Church threatens her adversaries with exile and prison, by means of which she would force them to believe, she who has been upheld by exiles and prisoners; when she leans upon the greatness of her protectors, she who has been consecrated by the cruelty of her persecutors!"[3]

Martin, on returning to his diocese, had also to undergo

[1] "Novum et inauditum facinus."—SULP., *Hist. Sacr.*, *loc. cit.* "Subinde nobiscum lacrymis fatebatur, et propter communionis illius malum . . . detrimentum sentire virtutis."—*Dial.*

[2] "Si ad fidem veram istius modi vis adhiberetur, episcopalis doctrina obviam pergeret, diceretque: Deus . . . non requirit coactam confessionem. Simplicitate quærendus est . . . voluntatis probitate retinendus."—S. HILARII, *Ad Constant.*, lib. i. c. 6.

[3] "At nunc, proh dolor! divinam fidem suffragia terrena commendant, inopsque virtutis suæ Christus, dum ambitio nomini suo conciliatur, arguitur. Terret exsiliis et carceribus Ecclesia: crediqne sibi cogit, quæ exsiliis et carceribus est credita. Pendet ad dignationem communicantium, quæ persequentium est consecrata terrore."—S. HILAR., *Cont. Auxent.*, ii. 4.

the scandalous envy and enmity of many bishops, and of those priests of Gaul who had been so soon tainted by Roman luxury, and who already made themselves remarked by the pomp of their equipages, their costumes, and their dwellings.[1] But amid the cares of his episcopate, he sighed more than ever after the sweetness of monastic life. To enjoy this he founded, half a league from Tours, the celebrated monastery which has honoured his name for more than fourteen centuries. Marmoutier[2] was then a kind of desert enclosed between the right bank of the Loire and the scarped rocks which overlook the course of the stream; it could be entered only by a very narrow path. The holy bishop inhabited there a cell made of interlaced branches, like that which he had for only too short a time occupied at Ligugé. The eighty monks whom he had collected there dwelt for the most part in pigeon-holes hollowed in the rock, and were attired only in camel skins. Among them were many noble Gauls, who were afterwards drawn from their retreat to be made bishops, like Martin, in spite of themselves.

Arrived at the end of his career, eighty years old, and eager to receive his celestial reward, he yielded to the tears of his disciples, and consented to ask from God the prolongation of his days. "Lord," said he, "if I am still necessary to Thy people, I would not draw back from the work." *Non recuso laborem!* Noble words which ought to be the motto of every Christian, and which was that of the monks for ten centuries.

The influence which the recommendation and guarantee

[1] "Qui ante pedibus aut asello ire consueverat, spumante equo superbus invehitur. . . . Inter episcopos sævientes cum fere quotidianis scandalis hinc atque inde premeretur, . . . non illi ego quemquam audebo monachorum, certe nec episcoporum quempiam comparare. . . . Nec tamen huic crimini miscebo populares: soli illum clerici, soli nesciunt sacerdotes."—SULP. SEVER., *Dial.*, c. 14, 17, 18.

[2] *Martini monasterium*, or *Majus monasterium*. Of this magnificent monastery, one of the greatest and richest in France, the archway of an outhouse in the external enclosure is all that remains. The rest of the building has been thrown down and demolished.

of such a man would exercise in the extension of the monastic order may be easily comprehended. But God decided that he was ripe for heaven: he died; and when his body was carried to the tomb which was to become the most venerated sanctuary in Gaul, two thousand monks formed its funeral train. Sulpicius Severus, his enthusiastic disciple, wrote his life, which soon attained throughout the West, in the East, and even as far as the Thebaid, a popularity equal to that of the *Life of St. Anthony* by Athanasius, and diffused everywhere at once the glory of the saint and that of the institution which he had loved so much.

This Sulpicius Severus, a rich noble of Aquitaine, and an eloquent advocate before he became the disciple of St. Martin, had been the friend of St. Paulinus of Nola. Like the latter, he had given up the world, his fortune, and his career at the bar, had sold his patrimony, and chosen for his dwelling one of his villas in Aquitaine among his slaves, who had become his brothers in *religion*. They lived there together, praying and labouring, sleeping upon straw, eating only brown bread and boiled herbs.

It should be remarked, to the honour of these first neophytes of the cenobitical order in Gaul, that it cost them a much greater sacrifice to conform themselves to the austerity of this new life, than it did to monks belonging to the naturally temperate population of Africa or the Levant. These poor Gauls, accustomed to the abundant and solid food of northern nations, found, in confining themselves to the abstinence prescribed by monastic rules, that the rations of the monks of Egypt and Palestine were indeed very meagre. The half-loaves of barley-bread and little handfuls of herbs which sufficed for the meals of the Thebaid, revolted their rebellious stomachs. Doubtless they often heard the beautiful words of St. Athanasius repeated: "Fasting is the food of angels."[1] But it did not satisfy

[1] "Jejunium enim angelorum cibus est: qui eo utitur ordinis angelici censendus est."—S. ATHANAS., *De Virgin.*, lib. ii.

them. "We are accused of gluttony," they said to Sulpicius, "but we are Gauls; it is ridiculous and cruel to attempt to make us live like angels: we are not angels; once more, we are only Gauls."[1] These murmurs did not prevent them from reserving, out of the produce of their labour, enough to support the poor whom they received in a hospice, in order that they might render them the humblest services. It was in this austere retreat that Sulpicius Severus wrote the biography of St. Martin and his *Sacred History*, which extends from the beginning of the world to the year 400, and was the first attempt at ecclesiastical history made in the West.[2]

Charity had been the soul of the efforts of St. Martin and his disciples, in the extension of the cenobitic institution upon the banks of the Loire, but it excluded neither the study nor love for sacred literature. Neither the care of the poor, nor the practice of any other monastic virtue suffered by it; yet we see intellectual life, and especially the culture of the defence of Christianity, reigning in a great and celebrated monastery, which was during all the fifth century the centre of monastic life in the south of Gaul, and which merits to itself alone a detailed history.

The sailor, the soldier, and the traveller who proceeds from the roadstead of Toulon to sail towards Italy or the East, passes among two or three islands, rocky and arid, surmounted here and there by a slender cluster of pines. He looks at them with indifference, and avoids them. However, one of these islands has been for the soul, for the mind, for the moral progress of humanity, a centre purer and more

[1] "Prandium sane locupletissimum, dimidium panem hordeaceum . . . fasciculum etiam herbæ intulit. . . . Qui nos edacitatis fatiges: sed facis inhumane, qui nos, Gallos homines, cogis exemplo angelorum vivere . . . quod, ut sæpe testatus sum, Galli sumus."—SULP. SEVER., *Dial.*, i. c. 3.

[2] Another friend of Paulinus and Sulpicius Severus, Aper, like them, rich, noble, and eloquent, retired into solitude with his wife, to live there in continence. It is supposed that this is the same person who afterwards became the first Bishop of Toul, and still enjoys popular veneration in Lorraine under the name of St. Èvre.

fertile than any famous isle of the Hellenic Archipelago. It is Lerins, formerly occupied by a city, which was already ruined in the time of Pliny, and where, at the commencement of the fifth century, nothing more was to be seen than a desert coast, rendered unapproachable by the numbers of serpents which swarmed there.[1]

In 410, a man landed and remained there; he was called Honoratus. Descended from a consular race, educated and eloquent, but devoted from his youth to great piety, he desired to be made a monk. His father charged his eldest brother, a gay and impetuous young man, to turn him from ascetic life; but, on the contrary, it was he who gained his brother. After many difficulties, he at last found repose at Lerins; the serpents yielded the place to him; a multitude of disciples gathered round him. A community of austere monks and indefatigable labourers was formed there. The face of the isle was changed, the desert became a paradise; a country bordered with deep woods, watered by beneficent streams, rich with verdure, enamelled with flowers, embalmed by their perfumes,[2] revealed the fertilising presence there of a new race. Honoratus, whose fine face was radiant with a sweet and attractive majesty,[3] opened the arms of his love to the sons of all countries who desired to love Christ.[4] A multitude of disciples of all nations joined him. The West could no longer envy the East; and shortly that retreat, destined, in the intentions of its founder, to renew upon the coasts of Provence the austerities of the Thebaid, became a celebrated school of

[1] "Vacuam insulam ob nimietatem squaloris, et inaccessam veneratorum animalium metu."—S. HILARII, *Vit. S. Honorati*, p. 15, ap. BOLLAND., t. ii. Januar.

[2] "Aquis scatens, floribus renitens . . . odoribus jucunda, paradisum possidentibus se exhibet."—EUCHER., *De Laude Eremi*, p. 342.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] "Velut ulnis effusis protensisque brachiis in amplexum suum omnes, hoc est in amorem Christi invitabat, omnes undique ad illum confluebant. Etenim quæ adhuc terra, quæ natio in monasterio illius cives non habet?" —HILAR., in *Vit. S. Honorati*, c. 17.

theology and Christian philosophy, a citadel inaccessible to the waves of Barbarian invasion, an asylum for literature and science, which had fled from Italy, invaded by the Goths; in short, a nursery of bishops and saints, who were destined to spread over the whole of Gaul the knowledge of the Gospel and the glory of Lerins. We shall soon see the beams of that light flashing as far as Ireland and England, by the blessed hands of Patrick and Augustine.

There is perhaps nothing more touching in monastic annals than the picture traced by one of the most illustrious sons of Lerins, of the paternal tenderness of Honoratus for the numerous family of monks whom he had collected round him. He could read the depths of their souls to discover all their griefs. He neglected no effort to banish every sadness, every painful recollection of the world. He watched their sleep, their health, their food, their labours, that each might serve God according to the measure of his strength. Thus he inspired them with a love more than filial: "In him," they said, "we find not only a father, but an entire family, a country, the whole world." When he wrote to any of those who were absent, they said, on receiving his letters, written, according to the usage of the time, upon tablets of wax: "It is honey which he has poured back into that wax, honey drawn from the inexhaustible sweetness of his heart." In that island paradise, and under the care of such a shepherd, the perfume of life breathed everywhere. These monks, who had sought happiness by renouncing secular life, felt and proclaimed that they had found it; to see their serene and modest joy, their union, their gentleness, and their firm hope, one could have believed one's self in presence of a battalion of angels at rest.[1]

[1] "Hic alget, hic ægrotat; illi hic labor gravis est, huic hæc esca non congruit. . . . Tabulis, ut assolet, cerâ illitis . . . litteris. . . . Mel, inquit, suum ceris reddidit."—HILAR., *op. cit.*, n. 18, 22. "Spirabat passim odor vitæ. . . . Angelica quietis agmen ostendunt. . . . Dum beatam quærunt vitam beatam agunt."—S. EUCHER., *l. c.*

The churches of Arles, Avignon, Lyons, Vienne, Troyes, Riez, Frejus, Valence, Metz, Nice, Vence, Apt, Carpentras, and Saintes, borrowed from the happy isle, as it was everywhere[1] called, their most illustrious bishops. Honoratus, taken from his monastery to be elevated to the metropolitan see of Arles, had for his successor, as abbot of Lerins,[2] and afterwards as Bishop of Arles, his pupil and relative Hilary,[3] to whom we owe the admirable biography of his master. Hilary, whom the gentle and tender Honoratus had drawn from worldly life after a desperate resistance, by force of entreaties, caresses, and tears,[4] retained in the episcopate the penitent and laborious life of the cloister of Lerins. He went through his diocese and the neighbouring country always on foot, and barefooted even in the snow. Celebrated for his graceful eloquence, his unwearied zeal, his ascendancy over the crowd, and by the numerous conversions which he worked, he was once at variance with the Pope, St. Leo the Great, who deprived him of his title of metropolitan to punish him for certain uncanonical usurpations; but Hilary knew how to yield, and after his death the Great Pope did him justice by calling him *Hilary of holy memory*.[5]

Amongst this harvest of saints, prelates, and doctors,

[1] "Beata illa insula."

[2] After St. Maximus, who was the first successor of Honoratus at Lerins, and afterwards Bishop of Riez.

[3] St. Honoratus died in 428, and St. Hilary of Arles (who must not be confounded with St. Hilary of Poitiers) in 449. Nothing can better prove the lasting popularity of the memory of St. Honoratus with all the southern races, than the Provençal poem called *Vie de St. Honorat*, written in the thirteenth century by Ramond Ferraud, a monk of Lerins, where the biography of the saint is strangely associated with the romantic traditions of the age of Charlemagne and Girat de Roussillon.—See *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, vol. xxii. p. 237.

[4] "Quamdiù mollire duritiam meam nisus est imbre lacrymarum; quam piis mecum pro salute mea amplexibus osculisque certavit! . . . Quoties sibi in animo meo velle et nolle successit!"—S. HILAR., *op. cit.*, n. 23.

[5] Ep. 37.

which Lerins gave to Gaul and to the Church,[1] there are still several whom it is important to indicate, because they are reckoned among the Fathers, and illuminated all the fifth century with their renown.

Holding the first rank among these was the great and modest Vincent de Lerins, who was the first controversialist of his time, and who has preserved to posterity the name of the isle which had been the cradle of his genius.

He composed the short and celebrated work which has gained him immortality, in 434, three years after the Council of Ephesus, and on occasion of the Nestorian heresy which that council had condemned. He would not put his name to it, and entitled it humbly, "Remarks of the Pilgrim," *Commonitorium Peregrini.* In this he has fixed with admirable precision, and in language as decisive as it is simple and correct, the rule of Catholic faith, by establishing it on the double authority of Scripture and tradition, and originating the celebrated definition of orthodox interpretation: *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est.* After having thus established the immutability of Catholic doctrine, he demands: "Shall there then be no progress in the Church of Christ?" "There shall be progress," he answers, "and even great progress, for who would be so envious of the good of men, or so cursed of God, as to prevent it? But it will be progress, and not change. With the growth of the ages and centuries, there must necessarily be a growth of intelligence, of wisdom, and of knowledge, for each man as for all the Church. But the religion of souls must imitate the progress of the human form, which, in developing and growing with years, never ceases to be

[1] See the curious volume entitled, *Chronologia Sanctorum et aliorum Virorum Illustrium ac Abbatum Sacræ Insulæ Lerinensis, a D. Vinc.* BASSALI SALERNO *compilata.* Leyden, 1613. Besides those who are named in the text, the holy abbot Caprais, Agricola, Bishop of Avignon, and Virgilius of Arles, to whom we shall return, ought to be noted.

the same in the maturity of age as in the flower of youth."[1]

Vincent has inscribed at the head of his masterpiece a testimony of his gratitude for the sweet sanctuary of Lerins, which was for him, as he says, the port of religion, when, after having been long tossed about on the sea of this world, he came there to seek peace and study, that he might escape, not only the shipwrecks of the present life, but the fires of the world to come.[2]

With Lerins also is associated the great fame of Salvian, the most eloquent man of his age after St. Augustine, and surnamed the *master of bishops*, though himself only a priest. He passed five years at Lerins; he experienced there the charms of peace and solitude in the midst of the horrors of barbarian invasion, and that frightful corruption of the Roman world, of which he has traced so startling a picture in his treatise upon the *Government of God.*

After these illustrious priests come bishops not less celebrated and holy. And in the first place Eucher, whom Bossuet calls the great Eucher,[3] who was a senator, the father of two sons, and still in the flower of his age, when he retired with his children to Lerins. Already, by assiduous study, familiar with the classic models, and versed in all the secrets of the art of writing, he there learned to know the secrets of monastic life; this inspired his eloquent *Panegyric on Solitude*, his treatise *On Contempt of the World and Worldly Philosophy*, and his tender and sprightly correspondence with St. Honoratus. Cassianus dedicated to Eucher, in conjunction with Honoratus, many of his *Collationes*, or conferences upon monastic life, which have had so lasting an

[1] "Sed forsitan dicet aliquis: Nullusne ergo in Ecclesia Christi profectus habebitur religionis? Habeatur plane, et maximus."—*Com.*, c. 136.

[2] "Remotioris villulæ, et in ea secretum monasterii incolamus habitaculum. . . . Quippe qui cum aliquandiu variis ac tristibus sæcularis militiæ turbinibus volveremur, tandem nos *in portum Religionis* cunctis semper fidissimum, Christo aspirante, condidimus."—*Præf. in Commonit.*

[3] Second sermon for the *Conception de la Sainte Vierge.*

influence in the Church; he associated the two friends in his veneration. "Oh, holy brothers," he said to them, "your virtues shine upon the world like great beacons: many saints will be formed by your example, but will scarcely be able to imitate your perfection."[1] Like Honoratus, Eucher was taken from the cloister to the episcopate, and died while occupying the metropolitan see of Lyons.

But the influence of the holy and learned Provençal isle shone still further than Lyons. Thence Troyes chose for its bishop that illustrious St. Lupus, who arrested Attila at the gates of Troyes, before St. Leo had arrested him at the gates of Rome. It was he who demanded of the king of the Huns, "Who art thou?" and who received the far-famed response, "*I am Attila, the scourge of God.*" The intrepid gentleness of the bishop-monk disarmed the ferocious invader. He left Troyes without injuring it, and drew back to the Rhine, but took the bishop with him, thinking that the presence of so holy a man would serve as a safeguard to his army.

St. Lupus undertook a journey perhaps less painful but not less meritorious, when he was chosen for his eloquence and sanctity by the Council of 429 to combat the Pelagian heresy in Great Britain, along with St. Germain of Auxerre. For the fifty-two years during which he held his bishopric, he observed faithfully all the practices of monastic fervour which he had learned at Lerins, and at the same time was warmly interested in the maintenance of ecclesiastical studies, and had a passionate love for literature, which made him keep up to his old age an epistolary correspondence with Sidonius Apollinaris. This eminent scholar, then occupying the episcopal see of Clermont, declared that he never met either barbarism or defect of punctuation in anything written by his venerable brother of Troyes. His virtues and enlightenment earned for him the praise of being, in the emphatic but sincere style of the period, "the father of

[1] See *Collationes* xi. to xvii.—"Vos sancti fratres . . . velut magna luminaria in hoc mundo admirabili claritate fulgetis."

fathers, the bishop of bishops, the prince of the prelates of Gaul, the rule of manners, the pillar of virtue, the friend of God, the mediator for men with Heaven."[1]

Some years before the death of St. Lupus, another saint, Cæsarius,[2] the son of the Count de Chalons, was born in Burgundy, and passed his youth in the shadow of the cloisters of Lerins before succeeding the first fathers of the holy isle, Honoratus and Hilary, upon the archiepiscopal see of Arles. He was for nearly half a century the most illustrious and the most influential of the bishops of Southern Gaul; he presided over four councils, and directed the great controversies of his time. He maintained nobly the independent and protecting authority of the episcopate against the Barbarian sovereigns who occupied Provence by turns, and whose jealousy was roused by his great influence over the people. He was exiled by Alaric, king of the Visigoths, and imprisoned by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths; but both ended by rendering him justice and homage. He was passionately loved by his flock; he swayed their hearts by that eloquent charity, of which the hundred and thirty sermons he has left us bear the stamp.[3]

But he continued always a monk, in heart, life, and penitence.[4] He even made out, for the use of various communities of men, a sort of rule, in twenty-six articles, less celebrated, less detailed, and less popular than that which he wrote for the great monastery of women, with which he endowed his metropolitan town. He was labouring with his own hands at the construction of this sanctuary, when

[1] He is thus styled by Sidonius Apollinaris in a letter (Epist. vi. 1) in which he recalls his youth spent at Lerins: "Post desudatas militiæ Lerinensis excubias." Elsewhere he calls him, "Facile principem pontificum Gallicanorum" (Epist. vii. 13).

[2] Born in 470, a monk at Lerins in 490, a bishop in 501, died August 27, 542.

[3] M. Guizot has given some fine and curious extracts from the sermons of St. Cæsarius.—(*Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, leçon 16.)

[4] "Nunquam Lerinensium fratrum instituta reliquit: ordine et officio clericus: humilitate, charitate, obedientia, cruce monachus permanet."—CYPRIANUS, *De Vit. S. Cesarii*, i. 4.

Arles was besieged in 508 by the Franks and Burgundians, who ruined all that he had done, and employed the materials which he had collected for their works of circumvallation. But as soon as the siege was raised, Cæsarius resumed his work and completed it. And the better to ensure the future prosperity of this refuge, which he raised amid the foaming waves of the Barbarian invasion, like an ark in the midst of the deluge,[1] he procured a confirmation of his foundation from Pope Hormisdas, who, at his express desire, exempted it even from episcopal jurisdiction. He made his own sister Cæsaria the abbess, who governed it for thirty years, and shortly gathered there two hundred nuns. This brave Christian woman caused to be prepared, and ranged symmetrically round the church of the monastery, stone coffins for herself and for each of the sisters. They all lived and sang day and night the praises of God in presence of the open tombs which awaited them.

It was into this church that Cæsarius himself, feeling his end approach, had himself conveyed to bless and console his daughters. And certainly, at that last moment, he did not forget his dear island of Lerins, that metropolis of monastic fervour, the glory of which he proclaimed in these impassioned words—"O happy isle, O blessed solitude, in which the majesty of our Redeemer makes every day new conquests, and where such victories are won over Satan! . . . Thrice happy isle, which, little as she is, produces so numerous an offspring for heaven! It is she who nourishes all those illustrious monks who are sent into all the provinces as bishops. When they arrive, they are children; when they go out, they are fathers. She receives them in the condition of recruits, she makes them kings. She teaches all her happy inhabitants to fly towards the sublime heights of Christ upon the wings of humility and charity. That tender and noble

[1] "Quasi recentior temporis nostri Noe, propter turbines et procellas, sodalibus vel sororibus in latere Ecclesiæ monasterii fabricabat arcam." —ACT. SS. BOLLAND., t. vi. Aug., p. 70.

mother, that nurse of good men, opened her arms to me also; but while so many others owe heaven to her teaching, the hardness of my heart has prevented her from accomplishing her task in me."[1]

Another monastic metropolis upon the same coasts of Provence, the Abbey of St. Victor at Marseilles, rivalled Lerins in importance. This abbey was built in the midst of those great forests which had supplied the Phœnician navy, which in the time of Cæsar reached as far as the sea-coast, and the mysterious obscurity of which had so terrified the Roman soldiers that the conqueror, to embolden them, had himself taken an axe and struck down an old oak.[2] It was built over the grotto where the holy martyr Victor, a Roman legionary, had been buried, at the end of the third century. It thus connected with the holy memory of the age of martyrs the more pacific, but still hard and incessant, labours of the new confessors of the faith. Its founder was John Cassianus, one of the most remarkable personages of the time. Born, according to the common opinion, in the country of the Scythians, according to others, at Athens, or even in Gaul,[3] he was first a monk at Bethlehem, and then in Egypt, where he dwelt seven years among the hermits of Nitria and of the Thebaid. He has left us a close and fascinating picture of their life.[4] He went afterwards to Constantinople to find St. John Chrysostom, who ordained him a deacon, and sent him to Rome to plead his cause with Pope Innocent I. At Rome he became the friend of St. Leo the Great before his elevation to the papacy, and at his request wrote a

[1] "Beata et felix insula Lyrinensis, . . . quos accipit filios reddit patres, . . . quos velut tirones (*aliter*, tyrannos) excipit, reges facit. . . . Voluit præclara mater, et unica et singularis bonorum nutrix."—S. Cæsarii, N° 25, ap. *Bibl. Max. Patr.*, viii. 845.

[2] Ruffi, *Histoire de Marseille*, 1696, t. i. p. 26.—De Ribbe, *La Provence au point de vue des bois*, &c., 1857, p. 23.

[3] This is the opinion of Holstenius, which Mabillon seems to adopt.—Compare J. B. Quesnay, *Cassianus Illustratus*.

[4] Extract from his *Collationes*, which forms the fourth book of the collection of P. Rosweyde.

refutation of the heresy of Nestorius against the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Having thus surveyed all the sanctuaries and studied the saints, he came to Marseilles and founded there the great Monastery of St. Victor,[1] which shortly reckoned five thousand monks, partly within its own walls, and partly among the houses reared in the shadow and under the influence of this new sanctuary.

It was to instruct and discipline this army of monks that Cassianus wrote the four books of *Institutions*, and the twenty-four *Conferences* or *Collationes*. These two works have immortalised his name, and retain the first rank among the codes of monastic life. In some he describes, even to its minutest details, the manner of living, of praying, and of self-mortification, which he had seen practised by the hermits of the Thebaid and Palestine. In others he develops their internal life, their mind, and their supernatural wisdom.

Cassianus had no desire that his monastery should be like Lerins, a kind of seminary for priests and bishops of the neighbourhood. Although he had been himself ordained a deacon by St. John Chrysostom, and a priest by Pope Innocent I., he was disposed to maintain and increase the ancient barrier which separated the monks from the secular clergy. He recommended the monks to avoid bishops, because the latter sought every occasion to impose upon them some ecclesiastical office in the world. "It was the advice of the Fathers," says he, "an advice always in season, that a monk should at all hazard flee from bishops and women; for neither women nor bishops permit a monk whom they have once drawn into their friendship to remain peacefully in his cell,

[1] In this abbey there were two churches, one built over the other; the lower or subterranean is understood to have been consecrated by St. Leo the Great, at the request of his friend Cassianus. Ruined by the Saracens in the ninth century, and re-established by William, Vicomte of Marseilles, the abbatial basilica was re-dedicated in 1043 by Pope Benedict IX., who came expressly from Rome to perform that ceremony, in presence of twenty-three bishops and ten thousand laymen.

nor to fix his eyes upon pure and heavenly doctrine, by contemplating holy things."[1]

But the Christian nations made a successful movement against those prohibitions of primitive fervour. They ardently sought, as priests and bishops, men trained in the monastic sanctuaries. And it was bishops and priests from the cloisters of St. Victor and of Lerins who gave to the clergy of Gaul, in the fifth century, that theological science and moral consideration in which prelates, taken from the Gallo-Romanic aristocracy, without having passed through monastic life, were too often deficient.

However, the Church, which during all the fourth century had to contend against Arianism, encountered, in the fifth, a new and not less serious danger in Pelagianism. After having denied the divinity of the Redeemer, heresy aimed a mortal blow at this doctrine and at Christian virtue, by denying the necessity of grace. Pelagius, the author of this heresy, was a Breton monk; his principal disciple was also a Breton, Celestius,[2] a monk like himself. Their dreadful error was long contagious. St. Augustine devoted all his knowledge and talent to confute it, and it was soon proscribed by the Church.

It has been asserted that this heresy found some support in the great monasteries of Southern Gaul, the services and merits of which have just been glanced at. Attempts have been made to prove that Pelagian opinions had their principal centre in the monastery of Lerins, and that Cassianus, after the condemnation of Pelagius, invented semi-Pelagianism.

[1] "Neuter enim sinit eum quem semel suæ familiaritati devinxerit vel quieti cellulæ ulterius operam dare," &c. — *Institutiones*, lib. xi. c. 17. Cassianus fell into some errors of doctrine; but as he died before the condemnation of his erroneous tenets, he was not the less regarded as a saint by a great number of the faithful.

[2] They preached at Rome about 405, and in Africa about 411. Absolved by the Council of Jerusalem in 415, they were condemned at Carthage and at Mileve, in 416 and 418. After 418 there is no further mention of Pelagius.

Happily no charge is more unfounded; and the silence of the Roman Church, then, as ever, so vigilant in the defence of orthodoxy, sufficiently absolves those whom modern historians have perhaps intended to honour by an imputation which they themselves would have rejected with horror. One defender of semi-Pelagianism alone proceeded from Lerins, the celebrated and virtuous Faustus, Bishop of Riez, who, besides, was not condemned till after his death. But Lerins equally produced St. Cæsarius, who gave the last blow to that error in the Council of Orange in 529.[1] It is, however, an undoubted certainty that, in the celebrated abbeys of St. Victor and Lerins, all the great questions of free-will, predestination, grace, and original sin, were studied and discussed with the attention and energy which became the holy life of these solitaries, and that this noble school of Lerins, while divided according to the individual predilections of its writers between the supporters and the adversaries of Cassianus and St. Augustine, sought to reconcile intelligence and freedom, in the highest possible degree, with grace and faith. Lerins was besides ardently devoted to Catholic unity, and to the authority of the Church; all its doctors give evidence of this in their writings, and one of the most illustrious, St. Hilary of Arles, as has been seen, by his dutiful submission to the sentence pronounced against him.

Thus enlightened by the double light which St. Martin had called forth in the West, and the school of Lerins in the South, there rose by degrees throughout all the provinces of Gaul, monasteries which came to console her invaded cities and rural districts, devastated by the incessant incursions of the Goths, Burgundians, and Franks. It is pleasant to trace back to the illustrious Bishop of Auxerre, St. Germain,[2] whose popularity in Gaul and Italy almost equalled that of

[1] GORINI, *Défense de l'Eglise contre les Erreurs Historiques*, t. i. p. 76.

[2] Born at Auxerre in 380, made a bishop in 418, died at Ravenna in 448. According to the Bollandists, there were almost as many churches bearing his name as that of St. Martin.

St. Martin, the origin of a monastery which bears his name, in his episcopal city, and which became one of the most celebrated abbeys of France in the middle ages.[1]

Not far from Auxerre, upon the confines of Eduens and Lingons, in the country already occupied by the Burgundians, and which was destined to bear their name, might be seen, between the Serain and Armançon, one of these deserts which were formed under the Roman administration. There was built the Abbey of Réome, which is considered the most ancient in Burgundy, and which has since, and up to our own days, been called Moutier-St.-Jean,[2] after its founder. This founder was the son of a senator of Dijon, with whom is associated one of those delightful tales which then began to spread throughout Gaul, and which prove the gradual victory of Christian morals over the hearts and imaginations of men, amid the struggles of barbarism with Roman decrepitude. His name was Hilary, or *the Joyous*, and that of his wife Quieta, or *the Tranquil*. The tenderness of their conjugal union, and the regularity which reigned in their house, excited the admiration of the inhabitants of Dijon. When the senator died, he was interred in a marble tomb which he had prepared for himself and his wife, and the splendour of which, an age later, dazzled

[1] See the *Histoire de l'Abbaye de St. Germain d'Auxerre*, by M. l'Abbé HENRY, curé de Quarré-les-Tombes. 1853.

[2] Of the vast and beautiful church of Moutier-St.-Jean, bought and destroyed in 1790 by one of the last monks, named Grouyn, there has remained, for ten years, only a very fine lateral gate, spared by chance, which stands isolated in the middle of a garden, a fine specimen of the architecture of the fourteenth century. No traces remain, however, of the noble west front, engraved by Dom Plancher, in the *Histoire de Bourgogne*, vol. i. p. 516. This digression touching a monastery, forgotten like so many others, will be pardoned to one who writes these lines not far from its ruins, and who constantly frequents the woods which were burned by an act of John, lord of La Roche-en-Breny, in 1239, with a tithe accorded to the Religious of Reomaus. The forest cantons named in that act still retain their old names of *Dos d'Ane* and *Bruyère de Valère*. Compare P. ROVERIUS (Father Royer), *Reomaus, seu Historia Monasterii S. Joannis Reomaensis*. Paris, 1637, quarto, p. 265.

Gregory of Tours, who has transmitted the story to us. Quieta rejoined him there at the end of a year; and when the covering of the sepulchre was raised to let down the body of the widow, the spectators cried out that they saw the husband extend his hand to encircle the neck of his wife, and all withdrew transported with admiration at that miracle of a conjugal tenderness which lasted even in the tomb.[1] The son of this exemplary couple, John, introduced monastic life into Burgundy, and at the same time began the cultivation of the plains of Auxois, now so fertile and well cleared, but then covered with impenetrable forests. John, and some companions who had joined him, courageously set to work. The axes with which they cut down the trees in the immediate neighbourhood of their retreat, were stolen from them to begin with.[2] A trifling matter, doubtless, and in appearance unworthy of history, but which gains interest from the thought that the work thus thwarted has succeeded by the sole strength of perseverance in well-doing, and has lasted thirteen centuries.[3]

At a still earlier period, Auvergne had attracted attention by the sanctity of its monks. It was the heart of Gaul; it was the country of the young Vercingetorix, the first hero of our history, so pure, so eloquent, so brave, and so magnanimous in misfortune, whose glory is all the rarer and dearer to good hearts from having been revealed to us only by his pitiless conqueror. The beautiful plain of the Limagne, overlooked by the table-land of Gergovie, where Cæsar met his only check, had attracted by turns

[1] "Sepulcrum ejus quod hodie patefecit . . . marmore pario sculptum. . . . Subito elevata vir dextra conjugis cervicem amplectitur. Quod admirans populus . . . cognovit quæ . . . inter ipsos dilectio fuisset in sæculo, qui se ita amplexi sunt in sepulcro."—GREG. TURON., *De Gloria Confess.*, c. 42.

[2] Act. SS. O. S. B., t. i. p. 614.

[3] John went to Lerins, when already an old man, to be instructed in the practices of monastic life; which did not prevent him from teaching his monks to adopt as their rule *The Institutes of the Egyptian Fathers.* —*Ibid.* He died, more than a hundred years old, in 539.

the admiration and covetousness of all its invaders. Enervated by imperial despotism, those Gauls who had conquered Rome before they were conquered by her, and who had resisted with so much heroism the legions of Cæsar, could only bow without resistance under the yoke of the Barbarian conquerors. The Vandals had not spared Auvergne in that frightful invasion in the early part of the fifth century, of which St. Prosper of Aquitaine has said, that if the entire ocean had overflowed upon the fields of Gaul, its vast waves would have made fewer ruins.[1] The Visigoths followed, bearing with them Arianism and persecution, condemning the bishops and priests to apostasy or martyrdom, giving up all the sanctuaries to sacrilegious devastation, and leaving after them, according to the testimony of Sidonius Apollinaris, cattle ruminating in the roofless vestibules, and eating grass beside the overthrown altars.[2] But, amidst those lamentable servitudes, a new life and liberty began to appear. Christian fervour had taken root there; it disputed the empire of souls with Roman corruption; it produced all those acts of virtue, courage, and abnegation which live in the narratives of Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours.

Before the East had revealed monastic institutions to the West, before St. Martin, before even the peace of the Church, the Roman Austremonius, one of the seven bishops sent into Gaul by Pope Fabian, had planted numerous Christian associations among the forests preserved and consecrated by Druidical superstition, and at the foot of the extinguished volcanoes of Auvergne. Issoire was the

[1] "Si totus Gallos sese effudisset in agros
Oceanus, vastis plus superesset aquis . . .
Omnes ultima pertulimus."
S. PROSP. AQUIT., *De Provid. Divin.*, p. 619, ed. Migne.

[2] "Ipsa, proh dolor! videas armenta non modo semipatentibus jacere vestibulis, sed etiam herbosa viridentium altarium latera depasci."—SIDON. APOLLIN., *Epist.* vii. 6.

first of these foundations, and at the same time the place of his own retreat, and the scene of his martyrdom. The history of his successor Urbicus, and of that fatal night when the wife whom he had left to become a bishop came to reclaim her place in the bed of the dishonoured priest, is known.[1] Withdrawn from his see after this scandal, he found in one of these new monasteries an asylum and a tomb, which he shared with his wife and the daughter who was born to them.

Most of the modern cities and villages of Auvergne owe their origin to communities[2] which were formed during the invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, and where the Auvergne Catholics, whose rather effeminate civilisation has been described by Sidonius Apollinaris, took refuge from the Arian persecution, and the calamities of which they were too submissive victims. One of these, founded about 525, received the name of *the Arverne monastery*, as if all the nationality of the country had taken refuge there. They were soon joined there by the Visigoths, who, when once converted, willingly mingled with the Gallo-Romans to serve together the God of the Gospel, and the Son of God equal with the Father. Some came from a still greater distance, for a hermit of the Thebaid, born in Syria, and persecuted by the Persians, is known to have ended his days in a cell near Clermont.[3]

Anchorites and even *stylites* appeared there as in the deserts of Mesopotamia and the country of Trèves, where Gregory of Tours met with a Lombard monk who had long lived upon the top of a pillar, from which he preached the

[1] GREG. TURON., *Hist. France*, t. i. c. 44.

[2] Among others, Issoire, Randan, Brioude, Thiers, Combronde, Mauriac, Menat, Ebreuil, &c. An excellent work of M. Branche, *L'Auvergne au Moyen Age*, the first volume of which alone has appeared, and which is exclusively devoted to the monasteries of this province, may be consulted with advantage, concerning the beginning of the monastic order in Auvergne.

[3] SIDON. APOLLIN., *Epist.*, vii. 17.

faith to the people, braving the intemperance of a sky less clement than that of the East.[1] In the monastery of Randan, the same Gregory knew a priest who constantly maintained a standing position, and whose feet were diseased[2] in consequence. From thence he went to render homage to a monk called Caluppa, who passed his life in a cavern, at the top of one of the peaks of Cantal, a prey to ecstasies and diabolical temptations. Some herdsmen had one day seen from a great distance an old man kneeling on the top of a hill, his arms raised towards heaven. They disclosed his existence without being able to address him, for even when the bishops came to visit him, this austere solitary would only permit them to approach the foot of his rock, whilst he, kneeling on the ledge of his grotto, received at that height their address and benediction.[3]

Long before that recent growth of the great monastic tree, and as long as it lasted, a new centre of monastic life arose in the eastern extremity of Gaul, upon those hills of Jura which separate Gaul from Switzerland, and in the heart of the province Sequanaise, which, after having been the scene of the first exploits of Cæsar on this side of the Alps, was to become the Thebaid of the Gauls. A native of Sequanaise named Romain, trained at the monastery of Ainay, near Lyons, left at the age of thirty-five his father's house, and, carrying with him the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, and some tools and seeds of vegetables, made his way into the high mountains and inhabited forests which overlook his native country, found a site enclosed between three steep heights, at the confluence of two streams, and there founded, under the name of Condat, a monastery destined to become one of the most celebrated in the West. The soil was little adapted for cultivation, but

[1] See the history of Wulflaich, related by Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.*, viii. 15, and translated by M. Guizot, *Hist. de la Civilisation en France*, leç. 14.

[2] *Hist. Franc.*, iv. 32.

[3] *Vit. Patr.*, c. 11.

in consequence of its difficult access, became the property of the first occupant.[1] He found shelter at first under an enormous fir-tree, the thick branches of which represented to him the palm which served the hermit Paul in the desert of Egypt for a tent; then he began to read, to pray, and to plant his herbs, with a certainty of being protected against the curious and importunate by the extreme roughness of the paths which crossed those precipices, and also by the masses of fallen and interlaced trees called *chablis*, such as are often met with in fir woods not yet subjected to regular care and tendance.

His solitude was disturbed only by the wild animals, and now and then by some bold huntsman.[2] However, he was joined there by his brother Lupicin and others, in so great a number that they were soon obliged to spread themselves and form new establishments in the environs.[3] The two brothers governed these monasteries together, and maintained order and discipline not without difficulty among the increasing multitude of novices, against which an old monk protested, complaining that they did not even leave him

[1] This right of the first occupant lasted upon the heights of the Jura through all the middle ages, and was recognised as ancient custom in a charter of 1126.—GUILLAUME, *Hist. de Salins*, v. i., proofs, p. 36. The chronicle in verse republished by Mabillon (*Annal.*, v. i. appendix, No. 3), evidently influenced by more modern ideas, declares the forest of the Jura, situated between the Rhone and Ain, to belong only to the Empire, and not to be comprised in any kingdom.

[2] "Porrectis in orbitam ramis densissimam abietem, quæ . . . velut quondam palma Paulum, texit ista discipulum. Congeries arborum caducarum. . . . Nullo, nisi ferarum et raro venantium frueretur aspectu."—*Vit. S. Romani*, ap. ACT. SS. BOLLAND., d. 28 Feb., p. 741. Compare *Vie des Saints Francs-Comtois*, by the professors of the college of St. Francis Xavier; Besançon, 1855—an excellent collection, which we shall often quote, the best of the kind which has appeared since the revival of Catholic studies.

[3] The first of these colonies was Lauconne, a league from Condat, which is now the village of St. Lupicin. Another, according to the most probable opinion, gave birth to the Abbey of Romain-Moutier, beyond the Jura, towards Lake Leman, of which we shall speak hereafter.

room to lie down in. Women followed, as they always did; and upon a neighbouring rock, suspended like a nest at the edge of a precipice,[1] the sister of our two abbots ruled five hundred virgins so severely cloistered, that having once entered into the convent they were seen no more, except during the transit of their bodies from the deathbed to the grave.

As for the monks, each had a separate cell; they had only the refectory in common. In summer they took their siesta under the great firs, which in winter protected their dwelling against the snow and north wind. They sought to imitate the anchorites of the East, whose various rules they studied daily, tempering them by certain alleviations, which were necessitated by the climate, their daily labour, and even by the constitution of the Gaulish race. They wore sabots and tunics of skins, slightly tacked together, which protected them from the rain, but not from the rigorous cold of these bleak heights, where people are, says their biographer, at once crushed and buried under the snow, whilst in summer the heat produced by the reflection of the sun upon the perpendicular walls of rock is insupportable. Lupicin surpassed them all in austerity; he slept in the trunk of a tree, hollowed out in the form of a cradle; he lived only upon pottage made of barley-meal ground with the bran, without salt, without oil, and without even milk; and one day, disgusted by the delicacy of his brethren, he threw indiscriminately into the same pot the fish, the herbs, and the roots, which the monks had prepared apart and with some care. The community was greatly irritated, and twelve monks, whose patience was exhausted, went away. Upon this an altercation arose between the two brothers. "It would have been better," said Romain to Lupicin, "that thou hadst never come hither, than come to put our monks to flight." "Never mind," answered

[1] This site is now occupied by the church of *St.-Romain-de-Roche*, where repose the relics of the holy founder of Condat.

Lupicin, "it is the straw separating from the corn; these twelve are proud, mounted upon stilts, and God is not in them." However, Romain succeeded in bringing back the fugitives, who all became in their turn superiors of communities.

For a colonising fertility soon became the manifest characteristic of this new republic: and it is in reference to Condat and its children, if I do not deceive myself, that monastic annals employ, for the first time, the trite but just image of the swarm of bees from the hive, to describe the colonies of monks which went forth from the mother monastery to people the Sequanaise and the neighbouring provinces with churches and monasteries.[2] They all recognised the authority of the two brothers; they already excited the admiration of orthodox Christians. Sidonius Apollinaris, whose cultivated mind loved to keep on a level with all contemporary events, knew and praised the solitudes of the Jura, and congratulated their inhabitants on finding there a foretaste of the joys of paradise.[3]

Towards the end of Romain's life, a child of seven years old was brought to him, who was destined one day to succeed him, and to give for several centuries his name to

[1] "Non solum nivibus obruta, sed sepulta . . . ita æstuantia alterno vicinoque saxorum vapore conflagrant."—*Vit. S. Rom.*, p. 742; *Ib.*, p. 743. "Frustra enormitate convertentium delectaris. . . . Diebus æstivis sub arbore solito quiescenti."—*Vit. S. Eugendi*, c. 14, ap. BOLLAND. "Lignea tantum sola, quæ vulgo *soccos* vocitant monasteria Gallicana."—*Vit. S. Lupicini*, ap. BOLLAND., d. 21 Mart., p. 263. "Hordaceas incretasque pultes, absque sale vel oleo. . . ."—*Vit. S. Roman., loc. cit.* "Si sic futurum erat . . . utinam nec accessisses. . . . Duodecim viri cothurnati atque elati . . ."—GREG. TURON., *Vit. Patrum*, i. 7, 8. This last incident happened at Romain-Moutier; "in illis Alemanise regionibus," says Gregory of Tours.

[2] "Cœperunt exinde venerabilia Patrum exanima, velut ex refecto apum alvearlo, spiritu sancto ructante, diffundi . . . ita ut non solum Sequanorum provincise loca secretiora . . ."—*Vit. S. Rom., loc. cit.*

[3] "Nunc ergo Jurensia si te remittunt jam monasteria, in quæ libenter solitus ascendere, jam cœlestibus præludis habitaculis."—SIDONII, lib. iv. Ep. 25.

Condat.[1] Eugende, fourth abbot, substituted a common dormitory, where he himself slept, to the separate cells of the monks, and specially occupied himself in promoting the work of education in the community. Greek and Latin literature was taught there with success, not only to the future monks, but to youths destined to return to the world; and Condat became the first school of Sequanie, and one of the most celebrated in Gaul. Study of the ancient orators[2] was united to the work of transcribing manuscripts, under the direction of Viventiole, the friend of the celebrated St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, whose eloquence he corrected, and whose barbarisms he noted, in that curious correspondence which all literary historians have recorded.

These intellectual labours did not imply their abandonment of manual work, and Viventiole sent to his friend a chair of boxwood made by his own hands, which marks the beginning of that valuable branch of industry, still existing, after the lapse of fourteen centuries, in the cottages of Jura.[3] Avitus answered him gracefully: "I wish you a chair in return for the seat which you have sent me." The prophecy was accomplished when Viventiole became metropolitan of Lyons in the beginning of the sixth century, and by the nomination of Avitus.

All those districts situated between the Rhone and the Rhine, and overshadowed by the Jura and Alps, were then occupied by the Burgondes, a race whose manners were

[1] Condat bore the name of St. Eugende or St. Oyand up to the twelfth century, and even in certain public acts up to the sixteenth. It is under this name that St. Bernard recommends this abbey to Eugenius III. (Ep. 291). It afterwards took the name of St. Claude, and then of another abbot, of whom mention will be made further on.

[2] "Præter Latinis voluminibus etiam Græca facunda."—*Vit. S. Eugend.*, c. 3. "De priscis oratoribus quos discipulis merito traditis."—*S. Avit.*, Ep. 71.

[3] Boxwood grew then in abundance on the mountains round St. Claude. This precious wood has now disappeared, and has to be brought from Switzerland, or even from Russia, to supply the workshops.

gentler and more pure than any of the other Barbarian races, and who, becoming Christians, and remaining orthodox till about the year 500, treated the Gauls less as conquered subjects than as brothers in the faith.[1] They were naturally much under the influence of the monks of Condat, and that ascendancy was exercised, as everywhere, for the benefit of the oppressed. Lupicin, already broken by age, went to the Burgonde king Chilperic,[2] who resided at Geneva, to plead with him the cause of some poor natives of Sequanaise, who had been reduced into slavery by a subordinate potentate.[3] This petty tyrant was one of those degenerate Romans, courtiers and oppressors, who, sometimes in the name of the decrepit power of the emperor, sometimes by flattering the new-born authority of the Barbarian kings, equally found means of trampling on and spoiling their inferiors. He was perhaps one of those senators of Gaul whom the Burgondes had admitted in 456 to a share of the conquered soil:[4] and Lupicin, although of Gallo-Roman origin, seems to have been less favourably disposed towards Roman government than that of the Barbarians. Gregory of Tours has recorded a tradition which well depicts the impression made upon the popular imagination by this apparition of the monks confronted with the triumphant Barbarians. He relates that when Lupicin crossed the threshold of the palace of

[1] PAUL OROSE, *Hist.*, lib. vii. c. 32.—They became Arians only under Gondebaud in 490, and returned to Catholicism under Sigismund in 515. It is not with a puerile affectation of archaism that I use the word *Burgondes*: I believe this designation to be natural and necessary to mark the first establishment of this race in the countries which have retained their name, and to distinguish the first kingdom of Burgundy from the kingdoms which bore the same name under the Merovingians, and afterwards the Carlovingians. The same difference exists between the Burgondes and Burgundians, as between the Franks and the French.

[2] Chilperic I., uncle of Chilperic II., father of St. Clotilde.

[3] "Pro afflictione pauperum quos persona quædam honore dignitatis aulicæ tumens . . . illicitæ servitutis jugo subdiderat."—*Vit. S. Lupicini*, *loc. cit.*, p. 265.

[4] "Eo anno Burgundiones partem Galliæ occupaverunt, terrasque cum Gallis senatoribus diviserunt."—MARII, *Chronic.*

Chilperic, the throne upon which the king was seated trembled, as if there had been an earthquake.[1] Reassured at the sight of the old man clothed with skins,[2] the Burgonde prince listened to the curious debate which arose between the oppressor and the advocate of the oppressed. "It is then thou," said the courtier to the abbot—"it is thou, old impostor, who hast already insulted the Roman power for ten years, by announcing that all this region and its chiefs were hastening to their ruin." "Yes, truly," answered the monk, pointing to the king, who listened—"yes, perverse traitor, the ruin which I predicted to thee and to thy fellows, there it is. Seest thou not, degenerate man, that thy rights are destroyed by thy sins, and that the prayer of the innocent is granted? Seest thou not that the fasces and the Roman purple are compelled to bow down before a foreign judge? Take heed that some unexpected guest does not come before a new tribunal to claim thy lands and thy domains."[3] The king of the Burgondes not only justified the abbot by restoring his clients to liberty, but he overwhelmed him with presents, and offered him fields and vineyards for his abbey. Lupicin would only accept a portion of the produce of these fields and vineyards, fearing that the sentiment of too vast a property might make his monks proud. Then the king decreed that they should be allowed every year three hundred measures of corn, three hundred measures of wine, and a hundred gold pieces for their vestments; and the treasury of the

[1] "Tremuit cathedra regis, exterritusque ait sus: Terræ motus factus est."—*De Vit. Patr.*, c. 1, n. 10.

[2] "Senem in veste pellicea."—*Ibid.*

[3] "Tu es ille dudum noster impostor . . . cum civilitatis Romanæ apicis arrogans derogares. . . . Ecce, perfide et perverse, . . . Nonne cernis . . . nutare muriceos pellito sub judice fasces? Respice paulisper et vide utrum rura et jugera tua novus hospes inexpectata jurisdictione."—*Vit. S. Lupicini*, p. 265. The authors of the *Vie des Saints de Franche-Comté* perfectly acknowledge, contrary to the opinion of Perreciot (*De l'Etat Civil des Personnes*, vol. ii. p. 34), that he acted here as a Gallo-Roman, and not as a Burgundian landowner.

Merovingian kings continued to pay these dues long after the fall of the kingdom of the Burgondes.[1]

The importance of the social and political part taken by the abbot Lupicin is also proved by the curious narrative of his intervention in the prosecution raised by Egidius, the representative of imperial authority in Gaul, against the Count Agrippinus, accused before the Emperor Majorian of having treated with the Barbarians. The abbot of Condat, who was the friend of this Count, and like him favourable to the Barbarians, became his *fide-jussor* or security, and was accepted as such by Egidius, who kissed his hand as he put it into that of the Count.[2]

Fifty years later, another Burgundian king, Sigismund, after having renounced Arianism and restored freedom to the Church in his kingdom, desired to build up the ruins of the monastery of Agaune, and sought at once in Condat and Lerins for monks to inhabit it. This new sanctuary was built at the entrance of the principal passage of the Alps, in one of the finest landscapes in the world, at the spot where the Rhone, having ended the first stage of its course, escapes by the gorges of the Valais to precipitate its muddy waters into the limpid azure of the Lake of Geneva. It was built in honour of the spot where St. Maurice and the Theban legion suffered martyrdom, having been stopped there, and preferring to die rather than to massacre the Christians who had risen in the great national insurrection of the Bagaudes against the frightful oppression of Roman conscriptions and taxes.[3] Their relics were collected there and deposited in a church more than once crushed by the fall of the rocks, between the masses of which the impetuous stream with difficulty forces a passage. Agaune took and has retained

[1] "Agros et vineas non accipiemus. . . . Quod usque nunc a fiscditionibus capere referuntur."—GREG. TURON., *l. c.*

[2] *Vita S. Lupicini*, pp. 266, 267.

[3] Compare ACT. SS. BOLLAND., d. Sept. 22, pp. 336, 342, 347; RETTBERG, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, vol. i. p. 96. This last author has very justly characterised that insurrection.

to the present day the name of St. Maurice.[1] It was from that time the monastic metropolis of the kingdom of Burgundy, so often destroyed and so often restored. A hundred monks descended from Condat to inhabit it; their former abbot, Viventiole, then Bishop of Lyons, assisted by his friend Avitus, presided at the ceremony of inauguration, and established, in a discourse which has been preserved to us, the principal conditions of the manner of life which the brethren were to lead there. The monks of Condat and Agaune followed for some time the same rule;[2] the same mind and discipline thus reigned from north to south in the Burgundian dominions. But Sigismund gave greater splendour to his foundation. By the liberality of his gifts, as many as nine hundred monks could be collected there, who, divided into nine choirs, sang alternately, and without intermission, the praises of God and the martyrs. This was called the *Laus perennis*, and it will be seen that the great Burgundian monastery was not the only one from which that tide of prayer gushed forth, keeping no silence night nor day. King Sigismund added himself to the number of this incessant choir, when he became a monk to expiate the crime which he, like Constantine, had committed in sacrificing the son of his first marriage to the treachery of his second wife. How he perished, with all his family, slain by the son of Clovis, is well known.

If, from the Rhone to the Danube, and from Savoy to Pannonia, we follow the Roman frontier, at all points encroached on and broken through, we shall always find monks at the post of honour and danger, of devotedness and salvation. Already we have seen them in conflict with the Goths, the Franks, and the Burgondes. Let us recognise

[1] This abbey, which has belonged since the year 1128 to the Regular Canons, is still in existence.

[2] Known as the *Rule of Tarnate:* this was the ancient name of Agaune, which some authors believe to have been founded two centuries before Sigismund, or at least since 478. Great uncertainty, however, remains respecting all rules prior to that of St. Benedict.

them upon the path of the Germanic races, whom Attila had temporarily drawn out of their natural course, the Thuringians, the Alemans, the Rugians, the Herules, who were about to overleap the last obstacles, and give the last blow to the phantom of the empire. Their influence was specially apparent in the life of Severin, written by one of his disciples, and brought to light in our own days by Ozanam, a writer full of charm and authority, who scarcely leaves anything to be gleaned wherever he has passed. Severin had established himself in Noricum, in these countries which have since become Bavaria and Austria, and inhabited a monastery near the present site of Vienna. He would never disclose the place of his birth; but his language denoted a Latin origin, and his life proved that he had dwelt long in the monastic deserts of the East,[1] before introducing cenobitical life on the banks of the Danube. Several centuries passed, however, before monastic life bore here its full fruits. But to Severin remains, in the grateful recollection of the people and the Church, the merit of its beginning.

A true physician and shepherd of souls, he devoted his wonderful activity and treasures of courage, patience, and skill, to maintain the faith in those provinces which were already almost entirely Christian, to preserve the life and goods of the invaded population, and to convert the conquering bands whose barbarism was aggravated by the Arian heresy. He repeatedly directed with success the military defence of Roman cities besieged by the Barbarians; and when victory was declared, as it usually was, for the latter, he occupied himself with unwearied solicitude in elevating the fate of the captives, in feeding and clothing them. Hardy as he was by means of fast and mortification, he hungered when they were hungry, and shivered when the cold seized upon their naked forms.[2] He seemed to

[1] *Vit. S. Severin., auct.* EUGIPPIO, ap. BOLLAND., d. 8 Jan., p. 485.

[2] "Studiosius insistebat Barbarorum ditione vexatos genuinæ restituere libertati. . . . Esurie miserorum se credebat afflictum. . . . Frigus quo-

have inspired Barbarians and Romans, on both banks of the great river which no longer guarded the territory of the empire, with equal veneration, and the king of the Alemans, subdued by the sight of that dauntless charity, having offered him the choice of any favour he pleased, Severin asked of him to spare the lands of the Romans and set his prisoners at liberty. He held the same influence over the king of the Rugians, another tribe which had come from the shores of the Baltic to establish themselves in Pannonia. But the wife of this king, more ferocious than himself, and wildly heretical besides, attempted to deter her husband from following the advice of the abbot, and one day when he interceded for the poor Romans whom she had sent into servitude beyond the Danube, she said to him: "Man of God, keep thyself calm to pray in thy cell, and leave us to do what seems good to us with our slaves."[1] But he was unwearied in his efforts, and almost always ended by triumphing over these savage yet still uncorrupted souls. Feeling his end approach, he called the king and queen to his deathbed. After having exhorted the king to remember the reckoning which he should have to render to God, he put his hand upon the heart of the Barbarian and turned to the queen: "Gisa," said he, "lovest thou this soul better than silver or gold?" And as Gisa protested that she loved her husband better than all treasures: "Well then," said he, "cease to oppress the just, lest their oppression be your ruin. I entreat both of you humbly, at this moment when I am returning to my master, to abstain from evil, and to do yourselves honour by your good deeds." "The history of invasions," adds Ozanam, "has many pathetic scenes, but I know nothing more instructive than the death

que vir Dei tantum in nuditate pauperum sentiebat."—*Vit. S. Severin.*, pp. 488, 491.

[1] "Conjux ferialis et noxia, nomine Gisa. . . . Ora tibi, serve Dei, in cellula tua delitescens, et liceat nobis de servis nostris ordinare quod volumus."—*Vit. S. Severin.*, p. 488.

of this old Roman, expiring between two Barbarians, and less moved by the ruin of the empire than by the peril of their souls." [1]

But it is his meeting with the German chief who was destined to overturn the dishonoured throne of the Roman emperors, which has specially preserved from oblivion the memory of Severin. Among the Barbarians who, on their way to Italy, voluntarily arrested their course to ask the benediction of the saint, in whom they instinctively honoured a greatness born to survive all that they were about to destroy, came one day a young Herule, poorly clad, but of noble race, and so tall that he had to stoop his head to enter the cell of the monk. "Go," said Severin to him, "go to Italy; now thou wearest but sorry furs, but shortly thou shalt be able to make gifts." This young man was Odoacer. At the head of the Thuringians and Herules, he took possession of Rome, sent Romulus Augustulus to die in exile, and, without condescending to make himself emperor, was content to remain master of Italy. In the midst of his conquest, he remembered the prediction of the Roman monk whom he had left upon the banks of the Danube, and wrote to him, desiring him to ask all that he would. Severin took advantage of this to obtain the pardon of an exile.[2]

It is pleasant to see this sweet and holy memory hovering over the catastrophe which terminates the shameful annals of old Rome, enslaved and degraded under her vile Cæsars, and which opens the history of modern Europe.

Thus, from the middle of the fifth century, the cenobitical

[1] *Etudes Germaniques*, t. ii. p. 42, ed. of 1849.

[2] "Dum se, ne humile tectum cellulæ suo vertice contingeret, inclinaret. . . . Vade ad Italiam, vilissimis nunc pellibus coopertus, sed multis cito plurima largiturus. . . . Familiares litteras dirigens . . . memor illius præsagii. . . . Ambrogium quemdam exulantem rogat absolvi."—*Vit. S. Sev.*, p. 494. Compare LEO, *Ursprung und Werden des Deutschen Reichs*, p. 320.

institution, proceeding from the Thebaid, has occupied one by one all the provinces of the Roman empire, and encamped upon all the frontiers to await and win the Barbarians.

The immense services which this institution has rendered to the Church, the new and necessary force which it has lent to society, fainting between the avenging embrace of the Germans and the despicable languor of expiring imperialism, may be already appreciated.

The monks were from that period the direct instruments, after the papacy, of the salvation and honour of Europe. They rendered her capable of that gigantic and supernatural effort against the inveterate paganism of the old world and the impetuous current of the northern invaders. Contemporaries themselves perceived it; no one disputed the solemn testimony of the priest Rufinus, who was not himself a monk, but who had long studied and observed them: "There is no doubt that without these humble penitents the world could not have retained its existence."[1]

Everything around them was calculated to sow terror and despair. On one side, the savage hordes of a hundred hostile nations filled Gaul, Italy, Spain, Illyria, Africa, all the provinces in their turn, with blood and horror: and after Alaric, Genseric, and Attila, a well-founded presentiment of the final fall of Rome and the empire increased in all hearts every day. On the other hand, Arianism, with its implacable and multiplied obstinacy, and the many heresies which succeeded each other without intermission, rent the Church, disturbed consciences, and made men believe in a universal overturn. When the judgments of God appeared in the beginning of the fifth century, the world lost its senses. Some plunged into debauchery to enjoy like brutes the last remnant of happiness; others sank into incurable melancholy.

The lovers of solitude, the men of penitence, sacrifice,

[1] "Ut dubitari non debeat ipsorum meritis adhuc stare mundum."—RUFFINI, Prolog. in *Vit. Patr.*, lib. ii.

and voluntary humiliation, alone knew how to live, hope, resist, and stand fast. To those who reproach the monkish spirit with enervating, debasing, and making sluggards of men, let it suffice to recall what monks were in these days of desolation and despair. They alone showed themselves equal to all necessities and above all terrors. Human courage has never been more tried than among the monks; it has never displayed greater resources nor more constancy: it has never showed itself more manful and unshakable.

They opposed to the successive waves of the Barbaric invasion an insurmountable barrier of virtue, courage, patience, and genius; and, when all external resistance was found impossible and useless, it was found that they had formed, for all the germs of civilisation and the future, shelters which the floods might pass over without engulfing them. In the midst of that deluge which annihilated Roman Europe and the ancient world, they concentrated themselves in a high and pure sphere, which was destined to survive all that chaos, and from which life was to descend upon a new world.

Their courage was only surpassed by their charity, by their tender and inexhaustible compassion for all the miseries with which they saw the world overwhelmed. They loved their neighbours passionately, because they loved God more than themselves. They drew the secret of this love and supernatural force from Christian self-renunciation, from the voluntary expiation of their own faults and the faults of others. In opposing poverty, chastity, and obedience, the three eternal bases of monastic life, to the orgies of wealth, debauchery, and pride, they created at once a contrast and a remedy. In sacrificing by a spirit of mortification all permitted privileges, marriage, property, and the free disposition of their time and their life, they became the guardians and saviours of those who justly desired to retain these legitimate possessions, and

who saw them exposed, in so desperate a condition of society, to irremediable outrages.

But let us not mistake regarding this. They never dreamt of making that exceptional life the common rule. They knew that it could only be the privilege of certain souls, more entirely penetrated than the rest by the blood of the Saviour. They did not assume to impose their evangelical counsels as precepts upon all. They remained faithful to the interpretation of the sacred text, which has never varied from the first popes until now. Their leaders always resisted the excesses of intemperate zeal in the Gnostics and others, who would have rendered obligatory upon all that which was only possible for some. Doubtless, certain events, certain lives, might be quoted which seem to lean towards excess; but there are excesses inseparable from the force and vigour of all great movements of the soul, and which only serve to reveal the existence of a vital and fertile current. In their hearts, and on the whole, they remained sheltered from all unregulated exaltation, firmly attached to apostolic traditions and the infallible prudence of the Church. They had no tendency, such as they have been accused of having, to transform the entire universe into a cloister; they desired only to create and maintain, by the side of the storms and failures of the world, the home, the refuge, and the school of a peace and strength superior to the world.

This was the cause of their powerful action upon the world from that period. In vain had they fled from men, for men followed them. All the good heart, high mind, and clear intellect, which remained in this fallen society, rallied round the monks, as if to escape from universal ruin. Their spirit breathed from the depths of the deserts upon towns, upon schools, and even upon palaces, to light them again with some gleams of vigour and intelligence. The distracted people sought them, listened to them, and admired them, though understanding them little, and imitating

them still less. But their existence alone was the most energetic protest against pagan materialism, which had ended by depraving all souls, and by undermining the social constitution of the Old World. They awoke in man all those intellectual and moral forces which could aid him to strive against the unheard-of calamities of the time. They taught him to struggle against that empire of sensuality which was to be so painfully expiated under the yoke of the Barbarians. They showed him at once the road to heaven and that of the future in this world, the sole future possible to these long-enervated races, a regeneration by suffering, voluntarily accepted and courageously endured.

They did not limit themselves to prayer and penitence: they spoke, they wrote much; and their masculine genius, their young and fresh inspiration, prevented the new Christian world from falling back from its first advances, either by literature or politics, under the yoke of exhausted paganism. The Fathers trained in the school of monastic life preserved the public mind, in these ages of transition, from the danger which it ran of allowing itself to be overborne and taken advantage of by scholars, elegant, but puerile and behind the age, whose dream was the reconstruction of a society which should find types in the pagan authors, such as Ausonius and Symmachus, and have for its heads and emperors apostates or Arians, such as Julian and Valens.

Among the populations degraded by the imperial yoke, the monks represented freedom and dignity, activity and labour. These were, above all, free men who, after having divested themselves of their patrimonial possessions, lived less by alms than by the produce of their labour, and who thus ennobled the hardest toils of the earth before the eyes of that degenerate Roman world in which agriculture was almost exclusively the portion of slaves.[1] They alone

[1] Compare MICHELET, *Histoire de France*, vol. i. lib. 1, c. 3.

recalled to the world the noble days of Cincinnatus, the dictator who was taken from the plough!

How St. Augustine repressed the criminal folly of those who would have substituted a pious idleness for that labour which the first Fathers of the desert gave so glorious an example of, and which all monks continued to practise with an unwearied zeal, has been seen. Thanks to them, and despite the ravages of the Barbarians and the indifference of the Romans, the lands of Egypt, Africa, and Italy, the most fertile and longest cultivated in the world, retained some traces of their ancient fruitfulness, till the time when the monks were to go to clear the countries which had been until then beyond the reach of all cultivation.

But the Church claimed them still more strongly than the world. In their origin, despite the tonsure and the black robes which distinguish them from laymen, monks formed no part of the clergy, and were not reckoned among ecclesiastical persons. St. Jerome, in several passages of his writings, declares that the monks ought to be like other laymen, submissive and respectful not only to the priests, but also to all the members of the clerical profession. They then formed a sort of intermediate body between the clergy and the faithful, like a formidable reserve of trained Christians.[1] The secular clergy were to see in them an ideal which it was not given to all to attain, but the presence of which alone constituted a check upon any falling away of the ministers of the Lord.[2] From the depths of their solitude, at Nitria as at Lerins, they also mixed actively in all the great controversies which diffuse so much life through the history of the fourth and fifth centuries. They were always found in the first rank of the armies of ortho-

[1] A passage in the life of St. Basil shows this distinction between the clergy and monks: "Mane facto, convocato *tam* venerabili clero *quam* monasteriis et omni Christo amabili populo, dixit eis," &c.—AMPHILOCHII EPISC. ICONII, *Vit. S. Basilii*, c. 8, ap. ROSWEYDE.

[2] MOEHLER, *Geschichte des Monchthums*, p. 2.

doxy. In vain had their first founders endeavoured to interdict them from accepting ecclesiastical dignities,[1] or even holy orders. From the earliest times they were drawn forcibly from their retreats to be ordained priests and bishops by the voice of the people, and by the enlightened choice of pastors such as Athanasius. The number of priests in their ranks soon increased, from which came the greatest bishops of Christendom, Basil, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Martin of Tours. This has not been sufficiently attended to: the Fathers of the Church, the great doctors of that primitive age, all, or almost all, proceeded out of the monastic ranks. Excepting St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose, and St. Leo the Great, all the other Fathers and all the doctors of these two centuries were monks, or trained in monasteries. We have already reckoned among them the four great doctors of the Eastern Church, Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nazianzus; and in the Western Church, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Fulgentius, Sulpicius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassianus, Salvian, St. Cæsarius of Arles, and afterwards St. Gregory the Great. No literature offers to the admiration of men greater names than these. Their writings remain the arsenal of theology. They have presided over the development of doctrine and all the primitive history of the faith. That alone should be enough to assure an ever-glorious place to the monastic order in the annals of the Church and the world. But it was not destined to stop there. Its part was only beginning. For a thousand years longer none of the great names of the Church shall be strangers to it; for a thousand years it shall inscribe its name at the head of all the great pages of history.

But at the period of which we speak, the monks were not the first, but the only, strong and great. Under a sway which united excess of license with excess of servitude, amidst political abjectness and social decrepitude, they alone

[1] St. Pacome formally forbade it in his rule.

were found worthy, pure, and intrepid, the sole orators, writers—in a word, the only men who preserved an independent standing. Thus they crossed the immense remnant of enslaved nations, and marched with a tranquil and steady step to the conquest of the future.

In this new world which began to dawn, they replaced two wonderful phenomena of the ancient world—the slaves and the martyrs: the slaves, by their indefatigable activity and heroic patience; the martyrs, by a living tradition of self-devotion and sacrifice. The long struggle which had vanquished the Roman empire without transforming it, was then to be continued under other names and other forms, but with the same power and success. An instinctive consciousness of this glorious succession must have existed in the mind of the unknown writer who commenced the biography of a Gallo-Roman monk of the sixth century with these words: "After the glorious combats of the martyrs, let us celebrate the merits of the confessors; for they also have conquered and lived only for Christ, and to them death has been gain; they have also become heirs of the heavenly Jerusalem. Now the camps and citadels of the soldiers of Christ shine everywhere. Now the King of heaven proclaims everywhere the titles and extends the glory of these numerous athletes, whose inanimate ashes triumph still over the enemy of the human race."[1]

Let us, however, be on our guard against a blind enthusiasm and partial admiration. Shadows were not wanting to this picture, nor blots in this light. The monks were not always nor everywhere without reproach. All contemporary chronicles prove that from that time a considerable number of men, strangers to the true spirit of the monastic condi-

[1] "Post gloriosos igitur agones martyrum, præclara recoluimus confessorum merita. Ecce autem undique resplendens castra militum Christi: ubique rex ille singulares titulos martyrum et confessorum suorum defixit, per quorum etiam exanimatos cineres de hoste humani generis triumphat . . . inter numerosa agmina athletarum."—*Prolog. Vit. S. Launomari*, ap. Act. SS. O. S. B., t. C., p. 339.

tion, stole in among them, not to speak of those whom the desire to escape slavery or famine drove into their ranks. We are obliged to admit that, even in this period of robust and glorious youth, disorders and abuses infected the monasteries. But from the first these were denounced, reprimanded, and stigmatised by the most illustrious among the cenobites, or apologists of the monastic institution, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine. The greatest and most serious of these disorders, that which was most repugnant to the fundamental spirit of the institution, and at the same time that which threatened to increase with the greatest rapidity, in spite of the severe decrees of the Council of Chalcedon,[1] was the passion for change and motion which drew bands of monks to the great roads and public places of the empire, there to give themselves up to all kinds of unwonted and boisterous demonstrations. Under the name of *Messalians* or of *Gyrovagues*, they passed their life in wandering from province to province, from cell to cell, remaining only three or four days in one place, living on alms extorted from the faithful, who were often scandalised by their bad morals, always wandering and never stable, enslaved to their passions and to all the excesses of conviviality; in short, according to the testimony of the greatest of monks, living such a life that it was better to keep silence than to speak of it.[2]

Others existed elsewhere, named in the Egyptian language Sarabaïtes, and who, to quote again the testimony of the reformer whose strongest laws were intended for their defeat, carried the stamp of the world into the cell, "like molten lead, and not like gold tried in the furnace." They lived two or three together, without rule or leader, caring

[1] See before, page 279.

[2] "Tota vita sua per diversas provincias ternis aut quaternis diebu per diversarum cellas hospitantur, semper vagi, et nunquam stabiles, sed propriis voluptatibus et gulæ illecebris servientes, et per omnia deteriores Sarabaïtis: de quorum omnium miserrima conversione melius est silere quam loqui."—*Reg. S. Bened.*, c. 1.

only for their own flocks, and not for the sheep of the Lord, taking their own desires and enjoyments as a law, declaring holy all that they thought and preferred, and holding all that displeased them as prohibited.[1]

These unworthy monks, "whose shaven heads lied to God,"[2] found encouragement for their wandering and disorderly life in the absence of any uniform rule or legislation imposed and approved by the Church.

Most of the great leaders of the cenobitical institution had, since St. Pacome, made out, under the name of Rule, instructions and constitutions for the use of their immediate disciples; but none of these works had acquired an extensive or lasting sway.[3] In the East, it is true, the rule of St. Basil had prevailed in a multitude of monasteries, yet notwithstanding Cassianus, in visiting Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, found there almost as many different rules as there were monasteries.[4] In the West, the diversity was still more strange. Each man made for himself his own rule and discipline, taking his authority from the writings or example of the Eastern Fathers.[5] The Gauls especially exclaimed against the extreme rigour of the fasts and abstinences, which might be suitable under a fervid sky like that of Egypt or Syria, but which could not be endured by what they already called *Gallican weakness;*[6] and even in the

[1] "Monachorum teterrimum genus est Sarabaïtarum, qui nulla regula approbati, experientia magistri, sicut aurum fornacis, sed in plumbi natura molliti adhuc operibus servantes seculo fidem . . . non dominicis, sed suis inclusi ovilibus, pro lege eis est desideriorum voluptas. . . ."—*Reg. S. Bened.*, c. 1.

[2] "Mentiri Deo per tonsuram noscuntur."—*Ibid.*

[3] Those who desire to have an idea of these premature and partial efforts have only to consult the *Disquisitiones Monasticæ* of P. HÆFTEN, lib. i. tract. 3, 4, and 5; Anvers, 1644, folio.

[4] "Tot propemodum typos ac regulas usurpatas vidimus, quot monasteria cellasque conspeximus."—CASSIAN., *Instit.*, lib. ii. c. 2.

[5] See before, the example of St. John, founder of Réome, p. 360, note 3.

[6] "Ista pro qualitate loci et instantia laboris invicta, potius quam Orientalium perficere affectamus, quia procul dubio efficacius hæc faci-

initial fervour of the monasteries of the Jura, they had succeeded in imposing a necessary medium upon their chiefs. Here, it was the changing will of an abbot; there, a written rule; elsewhere, the traditions of the elders, which determined the order of conventual life. In some houses various rules were practised at the same time, according to the inclination of the inhabitants of each cell, and were changed according to the times and places. They passed thus from excessive austerity to laxness, and conversely, according to the liking of each.[1] Uncertainty and instability were everywhere.

We have, therefore, committed a sort of anachronism in speaking up to this point, though in conformity with the language of contemporary authors, of the *monastic order*. A general arrangement was precisely what was most wanting in monastic life. There were an immense number of monks; there had been among them saints and illustrious men; but to speak truly, the monastic order had still no existence.[2]

Even where the rule of St. Basil had acquired the necessary degree of establishment and authority—that is to say, in a considerable portion of the East — the gift of fertility was denied to it. The distinctive character of the institutions and creeds of the East—which, after a first impulse, last without increasing, and remain stationary for ages, like trees planted in the shade which have roots but no fruit, and vegetate indefinitely without either rise or extension—might be remarked in it from that time.

In the West also, towards the end of the fifth century, the cenobitical institution seemed to have fallen into the torpor and sterility of the East. After St. Jerome, who died in 420, and St. Augustine, who died in 430, after the Fathers of Lerins, whose splendour paled towards 450, there

liusque natura vel infirmitas exequitur infirmitas Gallicana."—*Vit. S. Eugend.*, n. 24. Compare with the previous narrative of the protestations against the fasts imposed by Sulpicius Severus on his Gallic monks.

[1] MABILLON, *Præf. in sæc. I. Benedict.*; HÆFTEN, *loc. cit.*; D. PITRA, *Hist. de S. Léger, Introduct.*, p. lv.

[2] Compare DOM PITRA, *loc. cit.*, p. liii.

was a kind of eclipse. Condat still shone alone upon its heights of the Jura up to the beginning of the sixth century; but illustrious cenobites brilliantly occupying the first rank in the polemics and developments of Christian life, were no longer to be seen as formerly. Except in Ireland and Gaul, where, in most of the provinces, some new foundations rose, a general interruption was observable in the extension of the institution, whether because the final triumph of the Barbarian invasion had stifled for a time the efforts of zeal, and troubled the fountain of life at which these victorious races were to assuage their thirst, or that intervals of apparent inaction are necessary to the creations of Christian genius as to the forces of nature, in order to prepare them for the decisive evolutions of their destiny.

If this eclipse had lasted, the history of the monks of the West would only have been, like that of the Eastern monks, a sublime but brief passage in the annals of the Church, instead of being their longest and best-filled page.

This was not to be: but to keep the promises which the monastic order had made to the Church and to the newborn Christendom, it needed, at the beginning of the sixth century, a new and energetic impulse, such as would concentrate and discipline so many scattered, irregular, and intermittent forces; a uniform and universally accepted rule; a legislator inspired by the fertile and glorious past, to establish and govern the future. God provided for that necessity by sending St. Benedict into the world.

BOOK IV

ST. BENEDICT

SUMMARY

State of Europe at the end of the fifth century: debased by the Empire, divided by heresy, and ravaged by the invasions of the Barbarians.—St. Benedict was born in 480, and went into seclusion at Subiaco, the cradle of monastic life.—His trials.—His miracles.—His departure for Monte Cassino: he founds there the principal sanctuary of the monastic order.—Note on the description and history of Monte Cassino.—Life at Cassino.—Relations with the nobility.—Solicitude for the people.—Influence over the Goths.—History of Galla.—Interview with Totila.—The Lombards.—St. Scholastica.—Death of Benedict.—Analysis of his rule: the first made for the West.—Preamble.—Two dominant ideas.—Work.—Obedience qualified by the nature and origin of the command.—Analogy with the feudal system.—Conditions of the community thus organised.—Abdication of individual property.—Novitiate.—Vow of stability.—Roman wisdom and moderation.—Analysis of the details.—Liturgy.—Food.—Clothing.—Penalties.—Services.—Hospitality.—The Sick.—Summary of the rule by Bossuet.—Benedict's vision of the world in a single ray.—He did not foresee the social results of his work.—Immensity of these results.—The world is reconquered from the Barbarians by the monks.

BOOK IV

ST. BENEDICT

. . . Gli occhi dirizzai
E vidi cento sperule ch' insieme
Più s' abellivan con mutui rai.
Io stava come quei ch' in se repreme
La punta del disio e non s' attenta
Di dimandar, si del troppo si teme.
E la maggiore e la più luculenta
Di quelle margherite innanzi fessi
Per far di se la mia voglia contenta.
—*Paradiso*, c. xxii.

I.—HIS LIFE

ST. BENEDICT was born in the year of our Lord 480. Europe has perhaps never known a more calamitous or apparently desperate period than that which reached its climax at this date.

Confusion, corruption, despair, and death were everywhere; social dismemberment seemed complete. Authority, morals, laws, sciences, arts, religion herself, might have been supposed condemned to irremediable ruin. The germs of a splendid and approaching revival were still hidden from all eyes under the ruins of a crumbling world. The Church was more than ever infected by heresy, schisms, and divisions, which the obscure successors of St. Leo the Great in the Holy See endeavoured in vain to repress. In all the ancient Roman world there did not exist a prince who was not either a pagan, an Arian, or a Eutychian. The monastic institution, after having given so many

doctors and saints to the Church, in the East was drifting toward that descent which it never was doomed to re-ascend; and even in the West, as has just been seen, some symptoms of premature decay had already appeared. Thus, indeed, the monks gave too often an example of disorder and scandal as well as the rest of the clergy.

In temporal affairs, the political edifice originated by Augustus—that monster assemblage of two hundred millions of human creatures, "of whom not a single individual was entitled to call himself free"—was crumbling into dust under the blows of the Barbarians.

In the West, the last imperial phantom had just disappeared. Odoacer, the chief of the Herules, had snatched the purple of the Cæsars from the shoulders of Augustulus in 476, but disdained himself to put it on. He had succeeded in filling up the sink of pollution which called itself the Roman Empire, and in which, for five centuries, the glory and strength of ancient Rome, and the blood and substance of the world conquered by her arms, had been consumed. But Italy, though delivered from that oppressive fiction, remained a prey to successive floods of Barbarians. Already ravaged by Alaric and Attila, she had not enjoyed a breathing-time under the momentary shelter of the genius of Theodoric.

In the East, two theological tyrants disputed the dishonoured throne of Constantinople. One of these, Basilicus, had found five hundred bishops to subscribe the anathema which he launched against the pope and the orthodox Council of Chalcedon: the other, Zeno, authorised heresy in his edicts;[1] he exhausted with his spoliations and debaucheries the nations whom he did not even attempt to defend against the Barbarians. Thus commenced a period

[1] The *Henoticum*, or edict of union, published in 482, in opposition to the Council of Chalcedon, where the heresy of Eutychus, who held the divinity and humanity of our Lord to be the same nature, had been condemned.

of miserable and sanguinary disputes, which lasted, without intermission, for thirty-four years, until the advent of the predecessor of Justinian.[1]

In the other parts of Europe, the Barbarians founded states and kingdoms, some of which were destined to be not without distinction, but of which not one belonged even to the Catholic faith.

Germany was still entirely pagan, as was also Great Britain, where the new-born faith had been stifled by the Angles and Saxons. Gaul was invaded on the north by the pagan Franks, and on the south by the Arian Burgundians. Spain was overrun and ravaged by the Visigoths, the Sueves, the Alans, and the Vandals, all Arians. The same Vandals, under the successor of Genseric, made Christian Africa desolate, by a persecution more unpitying and refined in cruelty than those of the Roman emperors. In a word, all those countries into which the first disciples of Jesus Christ carried the faith, had fallen a prey to barbarism, and most frequently to a barbarism which the Arian heresy employed as the instrument of its hatred against the Church. The world had to be a second time reconquered.

Christian souls everywhere saw with terror the formidable prophecies of the ancient law against a false-hearted race realised anew. "Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful. . . . Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn

[1] Justin I., in 518.

unto them: they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it."[1]

Amidst this universal darkness and desolation, history directs our gaze towards those heights, in the centre of Italy, and at the gates of Rome, which detach themselves from the chain of the Apennines, and extend from the ancient country of the Sabines to that of the Samnites. A single solitary was about to form there a centre of spiritual virtue, and to light it up with a splendour destined to shine over regenerated Europe for ten centuries to come.[2]

Fifty miles to the west of Rome, among that group of hills where the Anio hollows the deep gorge which separates the country of the Sabines from that once inhabited by the Eques and Herniei, the traveller, ascending by the course of the river, comes to a kind of basin, which opens out between two immense walls of rock, and from which a fresh and transparent stream[3] descends from fall to fall, to a place named Subiaco. This grand and picturesque site had attracted the attention of Nero. He confined the water of the Anio by dams, and constructed artificial lakes and baths below, with a delicious villa, which took, from its position, the name of *Sublaqueum*, and of which some shapeless ruins remain. He sometimes resided there. One day, in the midst of a feast, the cup which he raised to his lips was broken by thunder,[4] and this omen filled his miserable

[1] Hab. i. 6–10. "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten."—Joel i. 4.

[2] All that we know of the life of St. Benedict has come to us from the most authentic source, Pope Gregory the Great. He has devoted book ii. of his *Dialogues* to the life of St. Benedict, relating it as he received it from the lips of four disciples of the holy patriarch, Constantine, Honoratus, Valentinian, and Simplicius, the two first of whom had succeeded him as abbots at Monte Cassino and Subiaco.

[3] "Frigidas atque perspicuas emanat aquas."—S. GREGOR., *Dial.*, lib. ii. c. 1.

[4] TACIT., *Annal.*, lib. xiv. c. 22.

soul with unusual terror; Heaven had marked this place with the seal at once of its vengeance and of its mercies. Four centuries after Nero, and when solitude and silence had long replaced the imperial orgies,[1] a young patrician, flying from the delights and dangers of Rome, sought there a refuge and solitude with God. He had been baptized under the name of Benedictus, that is to say, Well said, or Blessed. He belonged to the illustrious house of Anicius, which had already given so many of its children to monastic life.[2] By his mother's side he was the last scion of the lords of Nursia, a Sabine town, where he was born, as has been said, in 480. He was scarcely fourteen when he resolved to renounce fortune, knowledge, his family, and the happiness of this world. Leaving his old nurse, who had been the first to love him, and who alone followed him still, he plunged into these wild gorges, and ascended those almost inaccessible hills.[3] On the way he met a monk, named Romanus,[4] who gave him a haircloth shirt and a monastic dress made of skins. Proceeding on his ascent, and reaching to the middle of the abrupt rock, which faces to the south, and which overhangs the rapid course of the Anio, he discovered a dark and narrow cave, a sort of den, into which the sun never shone. He there took up his abode, and remained unknown to all except to the monk Romanus, who fed him

[1] NIBBY, *Topografia die Contorni di Roma*; JANUCCELLI, *Dissertaz. sopra l'Orig. di Subiaco*, 1851.

[2] See above, page 293. Compare HÆFTEN., *Disquisit. Monastic.*, 1644, *Proleg.*, 14. Two centuries after his death, the immense ruins of his ancestral palace were still to be seen at the gates of Nursia.—ADREVALD., *De Mirac. S. Bened.*, i. 1. Nursia, which was also the country of Sertorius, is now called Norcia.

[3] "Despectis literarum studiis, . . . relictis domo rebusque paternis . . . despexit jam quasi aridum mundum cum flore. . . . Quæ hunc arctius amabat, sola secuta est. . . . Per abrupta montium, per concava vallium, per defossa terrarum."—S. GREGOR., *l. c.*

[4] The locality of the meeting is indicated by a chapel called *Santa Crocella*, which is still seen between the two monasteries of St. Scholastica and *Sagro Speco*.

with the remainder of his own scanty fare,[1] but who, not being able to reach his cell, transmitted to him every day, at the end of a cord, a loaf and a little bell, the sound of which warned him of this sustenance which charity had provided for him.

He lived three entire years in this tomb. The shepherds who discovered him there, at first took him for a wild beast; but by his discourses, and the efforts he made to instil grace and piety into their rustic souls, they recognised in him a servant of God.[2] Temptations were not wanting to him. The allurements of voluptuousness acted so strongly on his excited senses, that he was on the point of leaving his retreat to seek after a woman whose beauty had formerly impressed him, and whose memory haunted him incessantly. But there was near his grotto a clump of thorns and briers: he took off the vestment of skins which was his only dress, and rolled himself among them naked, till his body was all one wound, but also till he had extinguished for ever the infernal fire which inflamed him even in the desert.[3]

Seven centuries later, another saint, father of the most numerous monastic family which the Church has produced after that of St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, came to visit that wild site which was worthy to rival the bare Tuscan rock where the stigmata of the passion were imprinted on himself.[4] He prostrated himself before the

[1] BOSSUET, *Panégyrique de Saint Benoît.*

[2] "Quem dum vestitum pellibus inter fruteta cernerent, aliquam bestiam esse crediderunt, . . . ad pietatis gratiam a bestiali mente mutati sunt."—S. GREGOR., *l. c.*

[3] "Quamdam aliquando fœminam aspexerat, quam malignus spiritus ante ejus mentis oculos reduxit: tantoque igne . . . animum in specie illius accendit, ut dum in ejus pectore amoris flamma vim caperet, etiam pene deserere eremum voluptate victus deliberaret. . . . Exutus indumento, nudum se in illis spinarum aculeis et urticarum incendiis projecit, ibique diu volutatus, totus ex eis vulneratus exiit. Ex quo tempore, sicut ipse postea perhibebat, ita in eo est tentatio voluptatis edomita, ut tale aliquid in se minime sentiret."—S. GREGOR., *l. c.*

[4] The *Alvernia*, near Chiusi, in the Casentin, where a celebrated monas-

thicket of thorns which had been a triumphal bed to the masculine virtue of the patriarch of the monks, and after having bathed with his tears the soil of that glorious battle-field, he planted there two rose-trees. The roses of St. Francis grew, and have survived the Benedictine briers. This garden, twice sanctified, still occupies a sort of triangular plateau, which projects upon the side of the rock a little before and beneath the grotto which sheltered St. Benedict. The eye, confined on all sides by rocks, can survey freely only the azure of heaven. It is the last of those sacred places visited and venerated in the celebrated and unique monastery of the Sagro Speco, which forms a series of sanctuaries built one over the other, backed by the mountain which Benedict has immortalised. Such was the hard and savage cradle of the monastic order in the West. It was from this tomb, where the delicate son of the last patricians of Rome buried himself alive, that the definite form of monastic life—that is to say, the perfection of Christian life—was born. From this cavern and thicket of thorns have issued legions of saints and monks, whose devotion has won for the Church her greatest conquests and purest glories. From this fountain has gushed the inexhaustible current of religious zeal and fervour. Thence came, and shall still come, all whom the spirit of the great Benedict shall inspire with the impulse of opening new paths or restoring ancient discipline in cloistral life. The sacred site which the prophet Isaiah seems to have pointed out beforehand to cenobites, by words so marvellously close in their application—"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit (CAVERNAM LACI) whence

tery indicates the place where the patriarch of the order of minor brothers received the stigmata :—

"Nel crudo sasso intra Tevere ed Arno
Da Cristo prese l' ultimo sigillo
Che le sue membra du' anni portarno."

—DANTE, *Paradiso*, c. xi.

St. Francis came to Subiaco in 1223.

ye are digged"—is there recognised by all. We lament for the Christian who has not seen this grotto, this desert, this nest of the eagle and the dove, or who, having seen it, has not prostrated himself with tender respect before the sanctuary from which issued, with the rule and institution of St. Benedict, the flower of Christian civilisation, the permanent victory of the soul over the flesh, the intellectual enfranchisement of Europe, and all that charm and grandeur which the spirit of sacrifice, regulated by faith, adds to knowledge, labour, and virtue.[1]

The solitude of the young anchorite was not long respected. The faithful in the neighbourhood, who brought him food for the body, asked the bread of life in return. The monks of a neighbouring monastery, situated near Vico Varo (the *Vario* of Horace), obtained, by dint of importunity, his consent to become their ruler, but, soon disgusted by his austerity, they endeavoured to poison him. He made the sign of the cross over the vessel which contained the poison, and it broke as if it had been struck with a stone. He left these unworthy monks to re-enter joyfully his beloved cavern, and to live by himself alone.[2] But it was vain: he soon found himself surrounded by such a multitude of disciples, that, to give them a shelter, he was compelled to found in the neighbourhood of his retreat twelve monasteries, each inhabited by twelve monks.[3] He kept some with him

[1] Petrarch, who visited Subiaco, says: "Illud immane et devotum specus, quod qui viderunt *vidisse* quodammodo *Paradisi limen* credunt."—*De Vitâ Solit.*, lib. ii. c. 9.

[2] "Cum ei cibum afferrent corporis, ab ejus ore in sua pectora alimenta referebant vitæ. . . . Vas pestiferi potus sic confractum est ac si pro signo lapidem dedisset. . . . Ad locum dilectæ solitudinis rediit, et solus in superni spectatoris oculis habitavit secum."—S. GREG., *l. c.*

[3] See some valuable details of those twelve monasteries in the *Memorie Storiche della S. Grotti di S. Benedetto sopra Subiaco*, by D. VINC. BINI, Abbot of the Sagro Speco, in 1840. Compare YEPES, *Coronica Geral de S. Benito*, ad an. 510. As to the actual state of the monastery of the Sagro Speco, it is perfectly described in a work by the abbot M. BARBIER DE MONTAULT, published by the *Annales Archéologiques* of DIDRON, vols. xviii.

in order to direct them himself, and was thus finally raised to be the superior of a numerous community of cenobites.

Clergy and laymen, Romans and Barbarians, victors and vanquished, alike flocked to him, attracted by the fame of his virtue and miracles. While the celebrated Theodoric, at the head of his Goths, up to that time invincible, destroyed the ephemeral kingdom of the Herules, seized Rome, and overspread Italy, other Goths came to seek faith, penitence, and monastic discipline under the laws of Benedict.[1] At his command they armed themselves with axes and hatchets, and employed their robust strength in rooting out the brushwood and clearing the soil, which, since the time of Nero, had again become a wilderness. The Italian painters of the great ages of art have left us many representations of the legend told by St. Gregory, in which St. Benedict restores to a Goth, who had become a convert at Subiaco, the tool which that zealous but unskilful workman had dropped to the bottom of the lake, and which the abbot miraculously brought forth. "Take thy tool," said Benedict to the Barbarian woodcutter—"take it, work, and be comforted." Symbolical words, in which we find an abridgment of the precepts and examples lavished by the monastic order on so many generations of conquering races: *Ecce labora!*[2]

and xix., 1859. The frescoes and inscriptions which make this sanctuary so precious a monument of Christian archæology, are there described with great exactness. These frescoes, several of which go as far back as the thirteenth century, have been reproduced with minute accuracy in a folio volume, entitled *Imagerie du Sagro Speco*, and published at Rome by an anonymous Belgian, printing-office of the R. C. A., 1855.

[1] It must be remarked, however, that Gothic monks had been seen in the neighbourhood of Constantinople from the fourth century, and that St. John Chrysostom had some intercourse with them.—BULTEAU, *Hist. Mon. d'Orient*, p. 463.

[2] "Gotthus quidam, pauper spiritu, ad conversionem venit, quem Dei vir Benedictus libentissime suscepit. . . . Ei dari ferramentum jussit, quod falcastrum vocatur, ut de loco quodam vepres abscinderet quatenus illic hortus fieri deberet . . . super ripam laci. . . . Cumque Gotthus idem densitatem veprium totius virtutis annisu succideret. . . . Ecce labora et noli contristari."—S. GREG., c. 6.

Beside these Barbarians already occupied in restoring the cultivation of that Italian soil which their brethren in arms still wasted, were many children of the Roman nobility whom their fathers had confided to Benedict to be trained to the service of God. Among these young patricians are two whose names are celebrated in Benedictine annals: Maur, whom the abbot Benedict made his own coadjutor; and Placidus, whose father was lord of the manor of Subiaco,[1] which did not prevent his son from rendering menial services to the community, such as drawing water from the lake of Nero. The weight of his pitcher one day overbalanced him, and he fell into the lake. We shall leave Bossuet to tell the rest, in his panegyric, delivered twelve centuries afterwards, before the sons of the founder of Subiaco: "St. Benedict ordered St. Maur, his faithful disciple, to run quickly and draw the child out. At the word of his master, Maur went away without hesitation, . . . and, full of confidence in the order he had received, walked upon the water with as much security as upon the earth, and drew Placidus from the whirlpool which would have swallowed him up. To what shall I attribute so great a miracle, whether to the virtue of the obedience, or to that of the commandment? A doubtful question, says St. Gregory, between St. Benedict and St. Maur. But let us say, to

[1] The father of Placidus, who was a senator called Tertullus, overwhelmed St. Benedict with territorial donations, and endowed, among others, according to tradition, that great monastery of San Severino, which is still to be seen at Naples, and where the beautiful series of frescoes by Zingaro, which represent the principal events in the life of St. Benedict, are admired. Since we have occasion here to remark these monuments of Christian art, which shed so bright and pure a light over the monuments of history, we may be permitted also to point out the admirable fresco of the church of San Severo, at Peruzzi, in which Raphael, in 1505, still a youth, has represented St. Benedict seated in heaven, and contemplating our Lord, with his two disciples, St. Placidus and St. Maur, by his side; in front of him, St. Romuald and two Benedictine martyrs. It has been perfectly engraved by M. Keller of Dusseldorf, the same to whom we owe the only engraving of the *Dispute du Saint Sacrement*, which is worthy of Raphael's masterpiece.

decide it, that the obedience had grace to accomplish the command, and that the command had grace to give efficacy to the obedience. Walk, my fathers, upon the waves with the help of obedience; you shall find solid support amid the inconstancy of human things. The waves shall have no power to overthrow you, nor the depths to swallow you up; you shall remain immovable, as if all was firm under your feet, and issue forth victorious."[1]

However, Benedict had the ordinary fate of great men and saints. The great number of conversions worked by the example and fame of his austerity awakened a homicidal envy against him. A wicked priest of the neighbourhood attempted first to decry and then to poison him. Being unsuccessful in both, he endeavoured, at least, to injure him in the object of his most tender solicitude—in the souls of his young disciples. For that purpose he sent, even into the garden of the monastery where Benedict dwelt and where the monks laboured, seven wretched women, whose gestures, sports, and shameful nudity were designed to tempt the young monks to certain fall. Who does not recognise in this incident the mixture of barbarian rudeness and frightful corruption which characterise ages of decay and transition? When Benedict, from the threshold of his cell, perceived these shameless creatures, he despaired of his work;[2] he acknowledged that the interest of his beloved children constrained him to disarm so cruel an enmity by retreat. He appointed superiors to the twelve monasteries which he had founded, and taking with him a small number of disciples, he left for ever the wild gorges of Subiaco, where he had lived for thirty-five years.

Without withdrawing from the mountainous region which

[1] *Panegyric of St. Benedict.*

[2] "Vicinæ ecclesiæ presbyter Florentius nomine, hujus nostri subdiaconi Florentii avus. . . . Ita ut in horto cellæ . . . ante eorum oculos nudas septem puellas mitteret, quæ coram eis sibi invicem manus tendentes et diutius ludentes, illorum mentes ad perversitatem libidinis inflammarent. Quod vir sanctus de cella prospiciens . . ."—S. GREGOR., c. 8.

extends along the western side of the Apennines, Benedict directed his steps towards the south along the Abruzzi, and penetrated into that Land of Labour, the name of which seems naturally suited to a soil destined to be the cradle of the most laborious men whom the world has known. He ended his journey in a scene very different from that of Subiaco, but of incomparable grandeur and majesty. There, upon the boundaries of Samnium and Campania, in the centre of a large basin, half-surrounded by abrupt and picturesque heights, rises a scarped and isolated hill, the vast and rounded summit of which overlooks the course of the Liris near its fountainhead, and the undulating plain which extends south towards the shores of the Mediterranean and the narrow valleys which, towards the north, the east, and the west, lost themselves in the lines of the mountainous horizon. This is Monte Cassino. At the foot of this rock, Benedict found an amphitheatre of the time of the Cæsars, amidst the ruins of the town of Cassinum, which the most learned and pious of Romans, Varro, that pagan Benedictine, whose memory and knowledge the sons of Benedict took pleasure in honouring, had rendered illustrious.[1] From the

[1] "Varro . . . sanctissimus et integerrimus."—CICERO, *Phil.*, ii. "Casinensis arcis sublimitas tanto olim culmine viguit, ut Romani celsitudo imperii philosophicis studiis illam in ævum dicaret. Hanc M. T. Varro omnium Romanorum doctissimus incoluit."—PETR. DIAC., *De Vir. Illust. Casin.*

"Nymphisque habitata rura Cassini."

—SIL. ITALIC., i. 12.

This town, restored by the monks, now bears the name of San Germano, in honour of a holy bishop of Capua, contemporary of Benedict. Between the town and the monastery, on a detached knoll of the mountain, still rises the vast castle of Rocca Janula, built in the middle ages, uninhabited, but not in ruins, with its towers and embattled ramparts, which were connected with the enclosures of San Germano by two long walls. Nothing could be more complete and striking than the general appearance of the holy mountain. At the foot, the modern town, with its Roman amphitheatre; half-way up, the feudal fortress; at the summit, the immortal monastery, always imposing and majestic, despite the alterations which its architecture has undergone.

summit the prospect extended on one side towards Arpinum, where the prince of Roman orators was born, and on the other towards Aquinum, already celebrated as the birthplace of Juvenal, before it was known as the country of the Doctor Angelico, which latter distinction should make the name of this little town known among all Christians.

It was amidst these noble recollections, this solemn nature, and upon that predestinated height, that the patriarch of the monks of the West founded the capital of the monastic order. He found paganism still surviving there. Two hundred years after Constantine, in the heart of Christendom, and so near Rome, there still existed a very ancient temple of Apollo and a sacred wood, where a multitude of peasants sacrificed to the gods and demons.[1] Benedict preached the faith of Christ to these forgotten people; he persuaded them to cut down the wood, to overthrow the temple and the idol. Let us listen to Dante, who has translated, in his own fashion, the narrative of St. Gregory, in that magnificent song of the *Paradise*, where the instructions of Beatrice are interrupted and completed by the apparition of the patriarch of the Western monks:—

"Quel monte, a cui Cassino e nella costa,
Fu frequentato già in su la cima,
Dalla gente ingannata e mal disposta;
Ed io son quel che su vi portai prima
Lo nome di colui che 'n terra adusse
La verità, che tanto ci sublima:
E tanta grazia sovra mi rilusse
Ch' io ritrassi le ville circonstanti
Dall' empio colto, che' l mondo sedusse."

Upon these remains Benedict built two oratories, one dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the first solitary of the

[1] "Vetustissimum fanum . . . in quo ex antiquorum more gentilium a stulto rusticorum populo Apollo colebatur circumquaque in cultu dæmoniorum luci succreverunt. . . . Infidelium insana multitudo."—S. GREGOR., c. 8.

new faith; the other to St. Martin, the great monk-bishop, whose ascetic and priestly virtues had edified Gaul, and reached as far as Italy. Round these chapels rose the monastery which was to become the most powerful and celebrated in the Catholic universe; celebrated especially because there Benedict wrote his rule, and at the same time formed the type which was to serve as a model to innumerable communities submitted to that sovereign code. It is for this reason that emulous pontiffs, princes, and nations have praised, endowed, and visited the sanctuary where monastic religion, according to the expression of Pope Urban II., "flowed from the heart of Benedict as from a fountainhead of Paradise;"[1] and which another Pope,[2] who himself issued out of Monte Cassino to ascend the apostolical chair, has not hesitated to compare to Sinai, in these lines of proud and bold simplicity which he engraved upon the altar of the holy patriarch—

"Hæc domus est similis Sinaï sacra jura ferenti,
Ut lex demonstrat hîc quæ fuit edita quondam.
Lex hinc exivit, mentes quæ ducit ab imis,
Et vulgata dedit lumen per climata sæcli."[3]

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[1] "Ipse omnium monachorum pater, et Casinense monasterium caput omnium perpetuo habeatur et merito, nam ex eodem loco de Benedicti pectore monastici ordinis religio quasi de Paradisi fonte emanavit."—*Bulla* URBANI II., *ad Calc. Chron. Casinen.*

[2] Didier, Abbot of Monte Cassino, successor to St. Gregory VII., under the name of Victor III.

[3] LEO OSTIENSIS, *Chr. Casin.*, iii. 27.

I do not undertake here to describe the actual condition of Monte Cassino, nor to retrace its history. I would rather refer, for this description, to two correct and careful notices, one by M. Adolphe de Circourt, in vol. ix. of the *Revue des Deux Bourgognes*, 1839; and the other by M. Dantier, in vol. x. of the *Revue Contemporaine*, 1853. I shall confine myself to indicating here those parts of the immense and splendid abbey which tradition traces to the time of St. Benedict. They are: 1st, the entrance gate, the very low arch of which indicates the yoke of humility under which the law obliged the monks to bend; on which is this inscription—"Fornicem saxis asperum ac depressum tantæ moli aditum angustum ne mireris, hospes. Angustum fecit patriarchæ sanctitas: vene-

Benedict ended his life at Monte Cassino, where he lived for fourteen years, occupied, in the first place, with extirpating from the surrounding country the remnants of

rare potius et sospes ingredere;" 2nd, the lower portion of the square tower which surmounted this gate, and which is believed to have been the residence of St. Benedict and his first companions, as is inferred in the following inscriptions, placed in two distinct apartments, "Pars inferior turris, in qua S. P. N. Benedictus dum viveret habitabat;" and on one side, "Vetustissimum habitaculum in quo SSmi patriarchæ discipuli quiescebant." In a higher floor of the same turret, another inscription affirms that it was there the saint had the vision of the death of his sister and the Bishop of St. Germain. Outside the monastery, the place consecrated by tradition is shown, where Benedict knelt in prayer before laying the first stone of his new dwelling, and that at which St. Scholastica, his sister and auxiliary, rested, when climbing for the first time to the summit of the rock. With regard to the chief monastery, though it will be perpetually mentioned in the following narrative, it is necessary to refer the curious to the book which a learned and zealous monk of Monte Cassino, Dom Luigi Tosti, published on this subject, in three volumes, at Naples in 1842. We restrict ourselves to the following dates:—Destroyed for the first time by the Lombards in 583, the monastery was restored by the Abbot Petronax, under Gregory II., in 731, and consecrated by Pope Zacharias, in 748. Again destroyed by the Saracens, who massacred the greater part of the monks, in 857; it was rebuilt anew by the Abbot Aligern about 950, and consecrated by Alexander II., in 1071. After many other calamities, it was entirely rebuilt in 1649, and consecrated for the third time by Benedict XIII., in 1727. In the time of its splendour, the abbot was first baron of the kingdom of Naples, and administrator of a special diocese, established in 1321, and composed of 37 parishes. Among his dependencies were reckoned four bishoprics, two principalities, twenty counties, 250 castles, 440 towns or villages, 336 *curtes* or manors, 23 maritime ports, 33 islands, 200 mills, 300 territories, 1662 churches.—HÆFTEN., *Comment. in Vit. S. Bened.*, p. 105. At the end of the sixteenth century, his income was reckoned at the enormous sum of 500,000 ducats. But all this splendour gradually disappeared, first from the effect of the *commende*, of which the Abbey of Monte Cassino became the prey in the fifteenth century, afterwards by the wars and revolutions of Italy. Despoiled and ransomed a last time by the French under Championnet, transformed into a mere library by King Joseph Bonaparte in 1805, it has recovered, since the restoration of the Bourbons, a remnant of life and fortune, which is developing under the fertile atmosphere of the monastic revival which the nineteenth century has the glory of having originated.

paganism, afterwards in building his monastery by the hands of his disciples, in cultivating the arid sides of his mountain [1] and the devastated plains around, but above all, in extending to all who approached him the benefits of the law of God, practised with a fervour and charity which none have surpassed. Although he had never been invested with the priestly character, his life at Monte Cassino was rather that of a missionary and apostle than of a solitary. He was, notwithstanding, the vigilant head of a community which flourished and increased more and more. Accustomed to subdue himself in everything, and to struggle with the infernal spirits, whose temptations and appearances were not wanting to him more than to the ancient Fathers of the desert,[2] he had acquired the gift of reading souls, and discerning their most secret thoughts. He used this faculty not only to direct the young monks, who always gathered in such numbers round him, in their studies and the labours of agriculture and building which he shared with them; but even in the distant journeys on which they were sometimes sent, he followed them by a spiritual observation, discovered their least failings, reprimanded them on their return, and bound them in everything to a strict fulfilment of the rule which they had accepted. He exacted from all the obedience, sincerity, and austerely regulated life of which he himself gave the first example.

Many young men of rich and noble families came here, as at Subiaco, to put themselves under his direction, or were confided to him by their parents. They laboured with the other brethren in the cultivation of the soil and the building of the monastery, and were bound to all the

[1] "Arida tu cujus hortis componis amœnis,
Nudaque fecundo palmite saxa tegis.
Mirantur scopula fruges, et non sua poma,
Pomiferisque viret silva domata comis."
—*Carmen de S. Bened., auct.* MARCO, *discip.*

[2] S. GREG., *Dial.*, c. 9, 10, 11, &c.

services imposed by the rule. Some of these young nobles rebelled in secret against that equality. Among these, according to the narrative of St. Gregory, was the son of a *Defender*—that is to say, of the first magistrate of a town or province. One evening, it being his turn to light the abbot Benedict at supper, while he held the candlestick before the abbatial table, his pride rose within him, and he said to himself, "What is this man that I should thus stand before him while he eats, with a candle in my hand, like a slave? Am I then made to be his slave?"[1] Immediately Benedict, as if he had heard him, reproved him sharply for that movement of pride, gave the candle to another, and sent him back to his cell, dismayed to find himself at once discovered and restrained in his most secret thoughts. It was thus that the great legislator inaugurated in his new-formed cloister that alliance of aristocratic races with the Benedictine order of which we shall have many generous and fruitful examples to quote.

He bound all—nobles and plebeians, young and old, rich and poor—under the same discipline. But he would have excess or violence in nothing: and when he was told of a solitary in the neighbouring mountains, who, not content with shutting himself up in a narrow cave, had attached to his foot a chain the other end of which was fixed in the rock, so that he could not move beyond the length of this chain, Benedict sent to tell him to break it, in these words, "If thou art truly a servant of God, confine thyself not with a chain of iron, but with the chain of Christ."[2]

And extending his solicitude and authority over the surrounding populations, he did not content himself with preaching eloquently to them the true faith,[3] but also healed

[1] "Quis est hic cui ego manducanti assisto, lucernam teneo, servitutem impendo? Quis sum ego uti isti serviam?"—S. GREG., *Dial.*, c. 20.

[2] "Si servus Dei es, non te teneat catena ferrea, sed catena Christi."—S. GREG., *Dial.*, lib. iii. c. 16.

[3] "Doctrinæ quoque verbo non mediocriter fulsit."—*Ibid.*, lib. ii. c. 36.

the sick, the lepers, and the possessed, provided for all the necessities of the soul and body, paid the debts of honest men oppressed by their creditors, and distributed in incessant alms the provisions of corn, wine, and linen which were sent to him by the rich Christians of the neighbourhood. A great famine having afflicted Campania in 539, he distributed to the poor all the provisions of the monastery, so that one day there remained only five loaves to feed all the community. The monks were dismayed and melancholy: Benedict reproached them with their cowardice. "You have not enough to-day," he said to them, "but you shall have too much to-morrow." And accordingly they found next morning at the gates of the monastery two hundred bushels of flour, bestowed by some unknown hand. Thus were established the foundations of that traditional and unbounded munificence to which his spiritual descendants have remained unalterably faithful, and which was the law and glory of his existence.

So much sympathy for the poor naturally inspired them with a blind confidence in him. One day, when he had gone out with the brethren to labour in the fields, a peasant, distracted with grief, and bearing in his arms the body of his dead son, came to the monastery and demanded to see Father Benedict. When he was told that Benedict was in the fields with the brethren, he threw down his son's body before the door, and, in the transport of his grief, ran at full speed to seek the saint. He met him returning from his work, and from the moment he perceived him, began to cry, "Restore me my son!" Benedict stopped and asked, "Have I carried him away?" The peasant answered, "He is dead; come and raise him up." Benedict was grieved by these words, and said, "Go home, my friend, this is not a work for us; this belongs to the holy apostles. Why do you come to impose upon us so tremendous a burden?" But the father persisted, and swore in his passionate distress that he would not go till the saint had raised up his son.

The abbot asked him where his son was. "His body," said he, "is at the door of the monastery." Benedict, when he arrived there, fell on his knees, and then laid himself down, as Elijah did in the house of the widow of Sarepta, upon the body of the child, and, rising up, extended his hands to heaven, praying thus: "Lord, look not upon my sins, but on the faith of this man, and restore to the body the soul Thou hast taken away from it." Scarcely was his prayer ended, when all present perceived that the whole body of the child trembled. Benedict took him by the hand, and restored him to his father full of life and health.[1]

His virtue, his fame, the supernatural power which was more and more visible in his whole life, made him the natural protector of the poor husbandmen against the violence and rapine of the new masters of Italy. The great Theodoric had organised an energetic and protective government, but he dishonoured the end of his reign by persecution and cruelty; and since his death barbarism had regained all its ancient ascendancy among the Goths. The rural populations groaned under the yoke of these rude oppressors, doubly exasperated as Barbarians and as Arians, against the Italian Catholics. To Benedict, the Roman patrician who had become a serf of God, belonged the noble office of drawing towards each other the Italians and Barbarians, two races cruelly divided by religion, fortune, language, and manners, whose mutual hatred was embittered by so many catastrophes, inflicted by the one and suffered by the other, since the time of Alaric. The founder of Monte Cassino stood between the victors and the vanquished like an all-powerful moderator and inflexible judge. The facts which we are about to relate, according to the narrative of St. Gregory, would be told throughout all Italy,

[1] "Redde filium meum. . . . Numquid ego filium tuum abstuli? . . . Regrediente anima, ita corpusculum pueri omne contremuit, ut sub oculis omnium qui aderant apparuerit concussione mirifica tremendo palpitasse." —S. GREG., *Dial.*, lib. ii. 32.

and, spreading from cottage to cottage, would bring unthought-of hope and consolation into the hearts of the oppressed, and establish the popularity of Benedict and his order on an immortal foundation in the memory of the people.

It has been seen that there were already Goths among the monks at Subiaco, and how they were employed in reclaiming the soil which their fathers had laid waste. But there were others who, inflamed by heresy, professed a hatred of all that was orthodox and belonged to monastic life. One especially, named Galla, traversed the country panting with rage and cupidity, and made a sport of slaying the priests and monks who fell under his power, and spoiling and torturing the people to extort from them the little that they had remaining. An unfortunate peasant, exhausted by the torments inflicted upon him by the pitiless Goth, conceived the idea of bringing them to an end by declaring that he had confided all that he had to the keeping of Benedict, a servant of God; upon which Galla stopped the torture of the peasant, but, binding his arms with ropes, and thrusting him in front of his own horse, ordered him to go before and show the way to the house of this Benedict who had defrauded him of his expected prey. Both pursued thus the way to Monte Cassino; the peasant on foot, with his hands tied behind his back, urged on by the blows and taunts of the Goth, who followed on horseback, an image only too faithful of the two races which unhappy Italy enclosed within her distracted bosom, and which were to be judged and reconciled by the unarmed majesty of monastic goodness. When they had reached the summit of the mountain they perceived the abbot seated alone, reading at the door of his monastery. "Behold," said the prisoner, turning to his tyrant, "there is the Father Benedict of whom I told thee." The Goth, believing that here, as elsewhere, he should be able to make his way by terror, immediately called out with a

furious tone to the monk, "Rise up, rise up, and restore quickly what thou hast received from this peasant." At these words the man of God raised his eyes from his book, and, without speaking, slowly turned his gaze first upon the Barbarian on horseback, and then upon the husbandman bound, and bowed down by his bonds. Under the light of that powerful gaze the cords which tied his poor arms loosed of themselves, and the innocent victim stood erect and free, while the ferocious Galla, falling on the ground, trembling, and beside himself, remained at the feet of Benedict, begging the saint to pray for him. Without interrupting his reading, Benedict called his brethren, and directed them to carry the fainting Barbarian into the monastery, and give him some blessed bread; and, when he had come to himself, the abbot represented to him the extravagance, injustice, and cruelty of his conduct, and exhorted him to change it for the future. The Goth was completely subdued, and no longer dared to ask anything of the labourer whom the mere glance of the monk had delivered from his bonds.[1]

But this mysterious attraction, which drew the Goths under the influence of Benedict's looks and words, produced another celebrated and significant scene. The two principal elements of reviving society in their most striking impersonation — the victorious Barbarians and the invincible monks—were here confronted. Totila, the greatest of the successors of Theodoric, ascended the throne in 542, and

[1] "Avaritiæ suæ æstu succensus, in rapinam verum inhians . . . ejus brachia loris fortibus astringens, ante equum suum cœpit impellere, . . . quem, ligatis brachiis, rusticus antecedens duxit. . . . Eidem subsequenti et sævienti dixit: Ecce iste est de quo dixeram te, Benedictus pater. . . . Surge, surge, et res istius rustici redde quas accepisti. . . . Ad cujus brachia dum oculos deflexisset . . . cumque is qui ligatus veniret cœpisset subito astare solutus. . . . Tremefactus Galla ad terram corruit, et cervicem crudelitatis rigidæ ad ejus vestigia inclinans. . . . Qui fractus recedens."—S. GREG., *Dial.*, ii. 31. This miracle is represented on one of the capitals of the beautiful and curious church of St. Benoît-sur-Loire, in the diocese of Orleans.

immediately undertook the restoration of the monarchy of the Ostrogoths, which the victories of Belisarius had half overthrown. Having defeated at Faenza, with only five thousand men, the numerous Byzantine army, led by the incapable commanders whom the jealousy of Justinian had substituted for Belisarius, the victorious king made a triumphal progress through Central Italy, and was on his way to Naples when he was seized with a desire to see this Benedict, whose fame was already as great among the Romans as among the Barbarians, and who was everywhere called a prophet. He directed his steps towards Monte Cassino, and caused his visit to be announced. Benedict answered that he would receive him. But Totila, desirous of proving the prophetic spirit which was attributed to the saint, dressed the captain of his guard in the royal robes and purple boots, which were the distinctive mark of royalty, gave him a numerous escort, commanded by the three counts who usually guarded his own person, and charged him, thus clothed and accompanied, to present himself to the abbot as the king.[1] The moment that Benedict perceived him, "My son," he cried, "put off the dress you wear; it is not yours." The officer immediately threw himself upon the ground, appalled at the idea of having attempted to deceive such a man. Neither he nor any of the retinue ventured so much as to approach the abbot, but returned at full speed to the king, to tell him how promptly they had been discovered. Then Totila himself ascended the monastic mountain; but when he had reached the height, and saw from a distance the abbot seated, waiting for him, the victor of the Romans and the master of Italy was afraid. He dared not advance, but threw himself on his face before the servant of Christ.

[1] "Cui dum protinus mandatum de monasterio fuisset ut veniret, Spatharius. . . . Tres qui sibi præ cæteris adhærere consueverat. . . ."—S. GREG., lib. ii. c. 14. The spatharius was called Riggo, and the three counts, Vulteric, Ruderic, and Blindin.

Benedict said to him three times, "Rise." But as he persisted in his prostration, the monk rose from his seat and raised him up. During the course of their interview, Benedict reproved him for all that was blamable in his life, and predicted what should happen to him in the future. "You have done much evil; you do it still every day; it is time that your iniquities should cease. You shall enter Rome; you shall cross the sea; you shall reign nine years, and the tenth you shall die." The king, deeply moved, commended himself to his prayers, and withdrew. But he carried away in his heart this salutary and retributive incident, and from that time his barbarian nature was transformed.[1]

Totila was as victorious as Benedict had predicted he should be. He possessed himself first of Benevento and Naples, then of Rome, then of Sicily, which he invaded with a fleet of five hundred ships, and ended by conquering Corsica and Sardinia. But he exhibited everywhere a clemency and gentleness which, to the historian of the Goths, seem out of character at once with his origin and his position as a foreign conqueror.[2] He treated the Neapolitans as his children, and the captive soldiers as his own troops, gaining himself immortal honour by the contrast between his conduct and the horrible massacre of the whole population, which the Greeks had perpetrated, ten years

[1] "Quem cum a longe sedentem cerneret, non ausus accedere sese in terram dedit . . .: Surge, sed ipse ante eum de terra erigere se non auderit. . . . Jesu Christi famulus per semetipsum dignatus est accedere ad regem prostratum, quem de terra levavit. . . . Ex illo jam tempore, minus crudelis fuit."—S. GREG., lib. ii. c. 14. There is in the church of the Benedictines of San Miniato, near Florence, a curious fresco by one of the most ancient painters of the great Florentine school, Spinello Aretino, which represents this historical scene in an impressive and primitive manner.

[2] "Benignitas quæ illique nec barbaro, nec hosti satis convenit . . . unde factum est ut ejus nomen ut sapientiæ, ita et benignitatis celebre apud Romanos jam esset."—PROCOP., *De Bell. Goth.*, i. 3. Compare the COUNT DU BUAT, *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Europe*, t. x. pp. 320, 329, 444.

before, when that town was taken by Belisarius. He punished with death one of his bravest officers, who had insulted the daughter of an obscure Italian, and gave all his goods to the woman whom he had injured, and that despite the representations of the principal nobles of his own nation, whom he convinced of the necessity for so severe a measure, that they might merit the protection of God upon their arms. When Rome surrendered, after a prolonged siege, Totila forbade the Goths to shed the blood of any Roman, and protected the women from insult. At the prayer of Belisarius he spared the city which he had begun to destroy, and even employed himself, at a later period, in rebuilding and repeopling it. At length, after a ten years' reign, he fell, according to the prediction of Benedict, in a great battle which he fought with the Greco-Roman army, commanded by the eunuch Narses. The glory and power of the Goths fell with him and his successor Teïas, who died in a similar manner the following year, fighting with heroic courage against the soldiers of Justinian. But it did not consist with the designs of God to let Italy fall a second time under the enervating yoke of the Byzantine Cæsars. The rule of the Barbarians, although hard and bloody, was more for her welfare. Venice and Florence, Pisa and Genoa, and many other immortal centres of valour and life, could issue from that sway, whilst the incorporation of Italy with the Lower Empire would have condemned her to the incurable degradation of the Christian East.

The Ostrogoths had scarcely disappeared when the Lombards, imprudently called in by Narses himself, came at once to replace, to punish, and to make them regretted, by aggravating the fate of the Peninsula.

Placed as if midway between the two invasions of the Goths and Lombards, the dear and holy foundation of Benedict, respected by the one, was to yield for a time to the rage of the other. The holy patriarch had a presentiment that his successors would not meet a second Totila to listen

to them and spare them. A noble whom he had converted, and who lived on familiar terms with him, found him one day weeping bitterly. He watched Benedict for a long time; and then, perceiving that his tears were not stayed, and that they proceeded not from the ordinary fervour of his prayers, but from profound melancholy, he asked the cause. The saint answered, "This monastery which I have built, and all that I have prepared for my brethren, has been delivered up to the pagans by a sentence of Almighty God. Scarcely have I been able to obtain mercy for their lives!" Less than forty years after, this prediction was accomplished by the destruction of Monte Cassino by the Lombards.

Benedict, however, was near the end of his career. His interview with Totila took place in 542, in the year which preceded his death; and from the earliest days of the following year, God prepared him for his last struggle, by requiring from him the sacrifice of the most tender affection he had retained on earth. In the history of most saints who have exercised a reformatory and lasting influence upon monastic institutions, the name and influence of some holy woman is almost invariably found associated with their work and devotedness. These bold combatants in the war of the Spirit against the flesh seemed to have drawn strength and consolation from a chaste and fervent community of sacrifices, prayers, and virtues, with a mother or sister by blood or choice, whose sanctity shed upon one corner of their glorious life a ray of sweeter and more familiar light. To instance only the greatest: Macrine is seen at the side of St. Basil, and the names of Monica and Augustine are inseparable; as in later ages are those of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clara, St. Francis de Sales and St. Jeanne de Chantal.

St. Benedict had also a sister, born on the same day with himself, named Scholastica: they loved each other as twins often love, with fraternal regard, elevated into a passion.

But both loved God above all. Still earlier than her brother, Scholastica had consecrated herself to God from her infancy; and in becoming a nun,[1] she made herself the patroness and model of the innumerable family of virgins who were to acknowledge, adopt, and follow the code of her brother. She rejoined him at Monte Cassino, and established herself in a monastery, in the depths of a valley near the holy mountain.[2] Benedict directed her from afar, as he did many other nuns in the neighbourhood.[3] But they met only once a year; and then it was Scholastica who left her cloister and sought her brother. He, on his side, went to meet her: they met upon the side of the mountain, not far from the door of the monastery, in a spot which has been long venerated.

There, at their last meeting, occurred that struggle of fraternal love with the austerity of the rule, which is the only known episode in the life of Scholastica, and which has ensured an imperishable remembrance to her name. They had passed the entire day in pious conversation, mingled with praises of God. Towards the evening they ate together. While they were still at table, and the night approached, Scholastica said to her brother, "I pray thee do not leave me to-night, but let us speak of the joys of heaven till

[1] This act is not inconsistent with the decrees made by the Pope St. Leo and the Emperor Majorian, who interdicted women from taking the veil before they had reached the age of forty. In those decrees, the solemn benediction, which is equivalent to what we now call the solemn or perpetual vows, is alone referred to.—See THOMASSIN, *Vetus ac Nova Disciplina*, pars i. lib. iii. c. 58. There were then, and had long been, several kinds of nuns. Some lived in isolated cells, as recluses; others remained, binding themselves to certain observances, in the bosom of their family; and others lived in a nunnery under a superior, and with a fixed rule. Mabillon has proved, against the Bollandists, that Scholastica ought to be ranked among the latter. He has entitled her *Virginum Benedictinarum Ducem, Magistram, et Antesignanam.*

[2] It is supposed that this monastery was that of *Plumbariola*, rebuilt afterwards for the wife and daughter of a king of the Lombards who became a monk of Monte Cassino.

[3] S. GREG., *Dial.*, ii. c. 12, 23, 33.

the morning." "What sayest thou, my sister?" answered Benedict; "on no account can I remain out of the monastery." Upon the refusal of her brother, Scholastica bent her head between her clasped hands on the table, and prayed to God, shedding torrents of tears to such an extent that the table was flooded with them. The weather was very serene: there was not a cloud in the air. But scarcely had she raised her head, when thunder was heard, and a violent storm began; the rain, lightning, and thunder were such that neither Benedict nor any of the brethren who accompanied him could take a step beyond the roof that sheltered them. Then he said to Scholastica, "May God pardon thee, my sister, but what hast thou done?" "Ah, yes," she answered him, "I prayed thee, and thou wouldst not listen to me; then I prayed God, and He heard me. Go now, if thou canst, and send me away, to return to thy monastery."[1] He resigned himself against his will to remain, and they passed the rest of the night in spiritual conversation. St. Gregory, who has preserved this tale to us, adds that it is not to be wondered at that God granted the desire of the sister rather than that of the brother, because of the two it was the sister who loved most, and that those who love most have the greatest power with God.[2]

In the morning they parted, to see each other no more in this life. Three days after, Benedict, being at the window of his cell, had a vision, in which he saw his sister entering heaven under the form of a dove. Overpowered with joy, his gratitude burst forth in songs and hymns to the glory of God. He immediately sent for the body of the saint, which was brought to Monte Cassino, and placed in the sepulchre which he had already prepared for himself, that

[1] "Insertis digitis manus super mensam posuit. . . . Caput in manibus declinans lacrymarum fluvium in mensam fuderat. . . . Parcat tibi omnipotens Deus, soror! quid est quod fecisti? . . . Ecce te rogavi et audire me noluisti. . . . Modo ergo, si potes, egredere, et, me dimissa, ad monasterium recede."—S. GREG., *Dial.*, ii. 33.

[2] "Justo valde judicio illa plus potuit quæ amplius amavit."—S. GREG.

death might not separate those whose souls had always been united in God.

The death of his sister was the signal of departure for himself. He survived her only forty days. He announced his death to several of his monks, then far from Monte Cassino. A violent fever having seized him, he caused himself, on the sixth day of his sickness, to be carried into the chapel consecrated to John the Baptist: he had before ordered the tomb in which his sister already slept to be opened. There, supported in the arms of his disciples, he received the holy viaticum; then placing himself at the side of the open grave, but at the foot of the altar, and with his arms extended towards heaven, he died standing, murmuring a last prayer.[1]

Died standing!—such a victorious death became well that great soldier of God.

He was buried by the side of Scholastica, in a sepulchre made on the spot where stood the altar of Apollo which he had thrown down.[2] On that day two monks, one of whom was in the monastery and the other on a journey, had the same vision. They saw a multitude of stars form into a shining pathway, which extended towards the east, from Monte Cassino up to heaven, and heard a voice which said to them, that by this road Benedict, the well-beloved of God, had ascended to heaven.[3]

[1] "Erectis in cœlum manibus stetit, et ultimum spiritum inter verba orationis efflavit."—S. GREG.

[2] Their tomb is still seen under the high altar of the present church of Monte Cassino. The inscription: "Benedictum et Scholasticam, uno in terris partu editos, una in Deum pietate cœlo redditos, unus hic excipit tumulus, mortalis depositi pro æternitate custos." I owe the reproduction of all those little-known inscriptions to the benevolent and scrupulous exactness of Mgr. La Croix, ecclesiastical representative of France at Rome.

[3] S. GREG., ii. 37.

II.—His Rule.

Etenim benedictionem dabit legislator: ibunt de virtute in virtutem.
—*Ps.* lxxxiii. 6, 7.

Di lui si fecer poi diversi rivi
Onde l' orto cattolico si riga
Sì che i suoi arbuscelli stan più vivi.
—*Paradiso*, c. xii.

Such was the life of the great man whom God destined to be the legislator of the monks of the West. It remains to us to characterise his legislation, that is to say, the rule which he has written, and which has been the undying code of the most august and fertile branch of the ecclesiastical army.

We must first observe that this rule is the first which had been written in the West and for the West. Up to that time, the monks of this half of the Roman world had lived under the authority of rules imported from the East, like that of St. Basil, or of traditions borrowed from the monks of Egypt or Syria, like those of which Cassianus had given so complete a collection. St. Benedict did not assume either to overthrow or replace the authority of these monuments, which, on the contrary, he recalled and recommended in his own rule.[1] But the sad experience of his beginning, of all that he had seen and suffered in his youth as anchorite, cenobite, and superior, had convinced him of the insufficiency of the laws by which the Religious of his own time and country were governed. He perceived that it was necessary, for the suppression of the laxness which appeared everywhere, to substitute a permanent and uniform rule of government, for the arbitrary and variable choice of models furnished by the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, and to add to the somewhat confused and vague precepts of Pacome and Basil a selection of precise and methodical rules derived as much from the lessons of the past as from his own personal experi-

[1] C. 73.

ence. His illustrious biographer instructs us to see in his rule an exact reproduction of his own life in the cloister.[1]

He undertook, then, to reform the abuses and infirmities of the order which he had embraced, by a series of moral, social, liturgical, and penal ordinances, the entire collection of which constitutes that *Rule* which, in immortalising his name and work, has given to the monastic institute in the West its definitive and universal form.[2]

Let us listen to his own exposition, in his preamble, of the spirit and aim of his reform, given in a style peculiar to himself, the somewhat confused simplicity of which differs as much from the flowing language of St. Augustine and St. Gregory as from the correct elegance of Cicero or Cæsar :—

"Listen, oh son![3] to the precepts of the Master, and

[1] S. GREG., ii. 36.

[2] We should remind our readers here that the Church recognised four principal rules, under which might be classed almost all the religious orders: 1st, That of St. Basil, which prevailed by degrees over all the others in the East, and which is retained by all the Oriental monks: 2nd, That of St. Augustine, adopted by the regular canons, the order of Premontré, the order of the Preaching brothers or Dominicans, and several military orders: 3rd, That of St. Benedict, which, adopted successively by all the monks of the West, still remained the common rule of the monastic order, properly so called, up to the thirteenth century; the orders of the Camaldules, of Vallombrosa, of the Carthusians, and of Citeaux, recognise this rule as the basis of their special constitutions, although the name of monk of St. Benedict or Benedictine monk may still be specially assigned to others: 4th and last, the rule of St. Francis, which signalised the advent of the Mendicant Orders at the thirteenth century. We shall further remark, that the denomination of *monks* is not generally attributed to the Religious who follow the rule of St. Augustine, nor to the mendicant orders.

The rule of St. Benedict has been published very often with and without commentaries. The most esteemed of the commentaries is that of Dom Martène, Paris, 1690, in 4to. That of Dom Calmet, Paris, 1734, 2 vols., may also be consulted with advantage.

The most recent and most correct edition of the Rule we know is that which has been given by Dom Charles Brandes, Benedictine of Einsiedeln, with a commentary and the history of the life of the patriarch, in three volumes. Einsiedeln and New York, 1857.

[3] It is necessary to note, for Christian iconography, these first words *Ausculta, o fili!* which painters of the middle ages are accustomed to reproduce on the book which they put in the hands of St. Benedict.

incline to Him the ear of thy heart; do not fear to receive the counsel of a good father and to fulfil it fully, that thy laborious obedience may lead thee back to Him from whom disobedience and weakness have alienated thee. To thee, whoever thou art, who renouncest thine own will to fight under the true King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and takest in hand the valiant and glorious weapons of obedience, are my words at this moment addressed.

"And in the first place, in all the good thou undertakest, ask of Him, in earnest prayer, that He would bring it to a good end; that having condescended to reckon us among His children, He may never be grieved by our evil actions. Obey Him always, by the help of His grace, in such a way that the irritated Father may not one day disinherit His children, and that also the terrible Master, enraged by our perverse deeds, may not give up His guilty servants to unending punishment because they would not follow Him into glory.

"Then, let us rise up in answer to that exhortation of Scripture which says to us, 'It is time for us to awake out of sleep.' And with eyes open to the light of God and attentive ears, let us listen to the daily cry of the Divine voice: 'Come, My son, hearken unto Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Work while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.'

"Now, the Lord, who seeks His servant in the midst of the people, still says to him, 'What man is he that desireth life and loveth many days, that he may see good?' When if, at that word, thou answerest, 'It is I,' the Lord will say to thee, 'If thou wouldst have life, keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace, and pursue it.' And that being done, 'Then shall My eyes be upon you, and My ears shall be open to your cry. And, even before thou callest Me, I shall say to thee, Here am I!'

"What can be more sweet, O beloved brethren, than the

voice of the Lord urging us thus? By this means the Lord, in His paternal love, shows us the way of life. Let us then gird our loins with faith and good works; and with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel, let us follow upon His footsteps, that we may be worthy of seeing Him who has called us to His kingdom. If we would find a place in the tabernacle of that kingdom, we must seek it by good works, without which none can enter there.

"For let us inquire at the Lord with the prophet . . . then listen to the answer He gives: . . . He who shall rest in the holy mountain of God is he who, being tempted by the devil, casts him and his counsel far from his heart, sets him at defiance, and, seizing the first offshoots of sin, like new-born children, breaks them to pieces at the feet of Christ. It shall be those who, faithful in the fear of the Lord, shall not exalt themselves because of their services, but who, remembering that they can do nothing of themselves, and that all the good that is in them is wrought by God, glorify the Lord and His works. . . .

"The Lord waits continually to see us answer by our actions to His holy precepts. It is for the amendment of our sins that the days of our life are prolonged like a dream, since the Apostle says: 'Art thou ignorant that the patience of God leads thee to repentance?' And it is in His mercy that the Lord Himself says: 'I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn to Me and live.'

"Having thus, my brethren, asked of the Lord who shall dwell in His tabernacle, we have heard the precepts prescribed to such a one. If we fulfil these conditions, we shall be heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Let us then prepare our hearts and bodies to fight under a holy obedience to these precepts; and if it is not always possible for nature to obey, let us ask the Lord that He would deign to give us the succour of His grace. Would we avoid the pains of hell and attain eternal life while there is still time, while

we are still in this mortal body, and while the light of this life is bestowed upon us for that purpose; let us run and strive so as to reap an eternal reward.

"We must, then, form a school of divine servitude, in which, we trust, nothing too heavy or rigorous will be established. But if, in conformity with right and justice, we should exercise a little severity for the amendment of vices or the preservation of charity, beware of fleeing under the impulse of terror from the way of salvation, which cannot but have a hard beginning. When a man has walked for some time in obedience and faith, his heart will expand, and he will run with the unspeakable sweetness of love in the way of God's commandments. May He grant that, never straying from the instruction of the Master, and persevering in His doctrine in the monastery until death, we may share by patience in the sufferings of Christ, and be worthy to share together His kingdom."[1]

In this programme the saint insists on two principles: action or labour, and obedience. These are indeed the two fundamental bases of his work; they serve as a clue to conduct us through the seventy-two articles of the rule which we shall now attempt to describe.

Benedict would not have his monks limit themselves to spiritual labour, to the action of the soul upon itself: he made external labour, manual or literary, a strict obligation of his rule. Doubtless the primitive cenobites had preached and practised the necessity of labour, but none had yet

[1] "Ad te ergo nunc meus sermo dirigitur . . . quisquis abrenuntians propriis voluntatibus Domino Christo vere regi militaturus, obedientiæ fortissima atque præclara arma assumis. . . . Exsurgamus ergo tandem aliquando. . . . Quærens Dominus . . . operarium suum. . . . Quid dulcius nobis hac voce Domini invitantis nos? . . . Qui malignum diabolum . . . deduxit ad nihilum, et parvulos cogitatus ejus tenuit et illisit ad Christum. . . . Ergo præparanda sunt corda et corpora nostra . . . militatura. . . . Constituenda est ergo a nobis Dominici scholæ servitii. . . . Processu vero conversationis et fidei, dilatato corde, inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine, curritur via mandatorum Dei."—*Prologus Regulæ.*

ordained and regulated it with so much severity and attentive solicitude. In order to banish indolence, which he called the enemy of his soul,[1] he regulated minutely the employment of every hour of the day according to the seasons, and ordained that, after having celebrated the praises of God seven times a day, seven hours a day should be given to manual labour, and two hours to reading. He imposed severe corrections on the brother who lost in sleep and talking the hours intended for reading. "If," said he, "the poverty of the place compels them to gather their harvest themselves, let not that grieve them, for they will be truly monks if they live by the labour of their hands, like our fathers and the apostles. But let all be done with moderation because of the weak."[2] Those who are skilled in the practice of an art or trade, could only exercise it by the permission of the abbot, in all humility; and if any one prided himself on his talent, or the profit which resulted from it to the house,[3] he was to have his occupation changed until he had humbled himself. Those who were charged with selling the product of the work of these select labourers, could take nothing from the price to the detriment of the monastery, nor especially could they raise it avariciously; they were to sell at less cost than the secular workmen, to give the greater glory to God. Labour was thus regulated in the monastery as in an industrial penitentiary, and the sons of the Roman patricians or the Barbarian nobles found themselves subjected, in crossing its threshold, to a severe equality, which bound even the labourer more skilful than ordinary monks, and reduced him to the humble level of an ordinary workman.

Obedience is also to his eyes a work, *obedientiæ laborem*,[4]

[1] "Otiositas inimica est animæ."—*Reg.*, c. 48.

[2] "Omnia autem mensurate fiant propter pusillanimes."—*Ibid.*

[3] "Artifices si sunt in monasterio. . . . Si aliquis ex eis extollitur pro scientia artis suæ."—*Ibid.*, c. 57.

[4] *Prologus Reg.*

the most meritorious and essential of all. A monk entered into monastic life only to make the sacrifice of self. This sacrifice implied especially that of the will. By a supreme effort of that will, still free and master of itself, it freely abdicated its power for the salvation of the sick soul, "in order that this soul, raising itself above its desires and passions, might establish itself fully upon God."[1] In giving up even the legitimate use of his own will, the monk, obeying a superior whom he had spontaneously chosen, and who was to him the representative of God Himself, found an assured defence against covetousness and self-love. He entered like a victor into the liberty of the children of God. But this sacrifice, to be efficacious, had to be complete. Thus the rule pursued pride into its most secret hiding-place. Submission had to be prompt, perfect, and absolute. The monk must obey always, without reserve, and without murmur, even in those things which seemed impossible and above his strength, trusting in the succour of God, if a humble and seasonable remonstrance, the only thing permitted to him, was not accepted by his superiors; to obey not only his superiors, but also the wishes and requests of his brethren.[2] Obedience became the more acceptable to God and easy to man, when it was practised calmly, promptly, and with good will.[3] It became then the first degree of humility. "Our life in this world," said the holy abbot, "is like the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream: in order to reach heaven, it must be planted by the Lord in a humbled heart: we can only mount it by distinct steps of humility and discipline."[4]

[1] BOSSUET.

[2] Cap. 68 et 71. "Si cui fratri aliqua forte gravia aut impossibilia injunguntur . . . si omnino virium suarum mensuram viderit pondus excedere, impossibilitatis suæ causas . . . patienter et opportune suggerat, non superbiendo. . . . Quod si . . . prioris imperium perduraverit . . . sciat junior ita se expedire, et, ex caritate confidens de adjutorio Dei, obediat."

[3] "Non trepide, non tarde, non tepide."—C. 5.

[4] "Scala vero ipsa erecta, nostra est vita in sæculo: quæ humiliato corde

What can we do but lament over those who, in this generous abnegation of self, have seen only something borrowed from the worship of imperial majesty in degenerate Rome, and a fatal present made to Europe to weaken its own virtues?[1] No, this is neither a production of social decay, nor a sign of spiritual servitude. It is, on the contrary, the triumph of that moral and spiritual liberty of which imperial Rome had lost all conception, which Christianity alone could restore to the world, and the reign of which, specially extended and secured by the children of St. Benedict, saved Europe from the anarchy, slavery, and decrepitude into which it had been thrown by the Roman empire.

Doubtless this passive and absolute obedience would, in temporal affairs, and under chiefs appointed from without, and governing according to their interests or passions, become intolerable slavery. But besides the fact that among the Benedictines it was to be, always and with all, the result of a free determination, it was also sanctified and tempered by the nature and origin of the power. The abbot holds the place of Christ: he can ordain nothing that is not in conformity with the law of God. His charge is that of the father of a family, and of the good pastor: his life should be the mirror of his lessons. Charged with the important mission of governing souls, he owes to God the severest reckoning, and almost at every page of the rule is enjoined never to lose sight of that terrible responsibility. He has not only to rule them, but to heal them; not only to guide them, but to support them, and to make himself the servant

a Domino erigitur ad cœlum. Latera enim hujus scalæ dicimus nostrum esse corpus et animam: in quibus lateribus diversos gradus humilitatis vel disciplinæ vocatio divina ascendendos inseruit."—C. 7.

[1] M. GUIZOT, *Cours d'Histoire Moderne*, 14th leç. As the antidote of this passage has been omitted by this great historian, generally better inspired, the *Panégyrique de St. Benoît*, by Bossuet, which is at the same time the eloquent and profound eulogy of the voluntary obedience of the Christian, should be read for this purpose.

of all whom he governs, obeying all, while each obeys him. He must accommodate himself to the most diverse humours and characters, but at the same time admit no respect of persons between the nobles and plebeians, the freemen and the slaves, the rich and the poor, who are under his authority.[1]

The exercise of this absolute authority is limited, besides, by the necessity of consulting all the monks assembled in a council or chapter upon all-important business. The abbot has to state the subject, and to ask the advice of each, reserving to himself the right of making the final decision; but the youngest must be consulted like the others, because God often reveals to them the best course to follow. For lesser matters, the advice of the principal members of the monastery is sufficient, but the abbot can never act without advice.[2] His permanent council is composed of deans or elders,[3] chosen by the monks themselves, not by order of seniority, but for their merit, charged with assisting the abbot, by sharing with him the weight of government. He can also, by the advice of these brethren, name a prior or provost, to be his lieutenant.[4] Finally, the abbot himself is elected by all the monks of the monastery: they may

[1] "Difficilem et arduam rem. . . . Regere animas et multorum servire morbus . . . se omnibus conformet et aptet. . . . Semper cogitet, quia animas suscepit regendas, de quibus et rationem redditurus est."—*Reg.*, c. 2. Compare c. 3. "Nec quasi libera utens potestate injuste disponat aliquid: sed cogitet semper quia de omnibus judiciis et operibus suis redditurus est Deo rationem."—C. 62. "Sciatque sibi oportere prodesse magis quam præesse."—C. 64. "Non præferatur ingenuus ex servitio convertenti, nisi alia rationabilis causa existat, . . . quia, sive servus, sive liber, omnes in Christo unum sumus, et sub uno Domino æqualem servitutis militiam bajulamus."—*Reg.*, c. 2.

[2] "Convocet abbas omnem congregationem . . . et audiens consilium fratrum, tractet apud se, et quod utilius judicaverit faciat. . . . Omnes ad consilium vocari diximus, quia sæpe juniori Dominus revelat quod melius est. . . . Non præsumant defendere procaciter quod eis visum fuerit."—*Ibid.*, c. 3.

[3] Decani. Compare *Reg.*, c. 3 and 21. HÆFTEN., *Disquis.*, pp. 325, 332.

[4] *Reg.*, c. 65.

choose the last new-comer amongst them to be their chief; and once elected, his authority ceases only with his life.[1] But in case of the election of an evidently unworthy person, the bishop of the diocese, or the neighbouring abbots, or even the Christians of the environs, are entreated to prevent such a scandal.[2]

This absolute authority of the abbot, fixed in a rule which he is neither permitted to modify or transgress, was then limited at once by the unchanging constitution of the community, by the necessity of consulting either an elect number or the whole body of his subordinates upon all business, and finally by the election from which it proceeded; and this election made by a limited number of electors, all essentially competent, and personally interested in their work, made the chief in reality the servant of all those whom he commanded.

It must be acknowledged that the spirit of community or association was never more strongly organised. There is, in this combination of authority, at once absolute, permanent, and elective, with the necessity of taking the advice of the whole community and of acting solely in its interests, a new principle, to which nothing in the pagan world nor in the Lower Empire was analogous—a principle which demonstrated its energetic fertility by the experience of ages. The community drew an irresistible force from the union of these wills purified by abnegation, and concentrated towards one sole end under a single hand, which was ruled and controlled in its turn by the spirit of sacrifice. Between the profligacy of the empire and the anarchy of conquest, the Benedictine cloister, that living image of Christianity, presented to the decaying world a system which retained

[1] "Etiam si ultimus fuerit in ordine congregationis."—*Reg.*, c. 64.

[2] At that time a majority was not requisite: the choice of the minority, if better, might carry the day: "Sive etiam pars, quamvis parva, congregationis, saniori consilio elegerit," c. 64. Subsequently, an absolute majority of voters was universally required to render valid the election of an abbot.

at once the vigorous discipline of the Roman legions and that spirit of self-devotion and domestic unity remarked by Tacitus in the German guilds.

It has been said with truth, that there exists in this rule an evangelical foundation and a feudal form.[1] The institutions which it founded, like the words and images which it employed, bore a certain warlike stamp. It seemed to extend a hand to the feudal system, which originated in the camps of the victorious Barbarians. Of these two forces, the one organised and consolidated material conquest, the other created a hierarchy and army for the conquest of souls.

The monastery, like a citadel always besieged, was to have within its enclosure gardens, a mill, a bakery, and various workshops, in order that no necessity of material life should occasion the monks to leave its walls.[2] A certain number of Religious, whom the abbot judged worthy, might be raised to the priesthood, for the spiritual service of the house, without ceasing, on that account, to be subject to ordinary discipline.[3]

One monk, chosen from among the most worthy, under the title of cellarer, was specially charged with the administration of the goods of the monastery, the distribution of food, the care of the furniture, of the hospital, and, in a word, with all the details of material life.[4] Finally, the most generous and delicate hospitality was enjoined towards the poor and all the strangers who should visit the monastery; this was to be exercised by the direct care of the abbot,[5] but without disturbing the solitude of the monks, or

[1] Dom Pitra, *Hist. de St. Léger*, p. 58. [2] *Reg.*, c. 66.

[3] *Ibid.*, c. 62. It has been already shown that in the first centuries of its existence, the monastic order was not regarded as part of the clergy. Not only were the monks not all priests, but they were reckoned among laymen. It is very difficult to follow and recognise the different phases of the transformation which elevated the monks from the lay condition to that which procured them the title and standing of the *Regular Clergy*, in opposition to the *Secular Clergy*.

[4] *Ibid.*, c. 31. [5] *Ibid.*, c. 53.

the silence of their cloisters. Let every stranger be received, says the rule, as if he were Christ Himself; for it is Christ Himself who shall one day say to us, "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in."[1]

The community thus founded and governed was supported besides by two conditions indispensable to its security and duration: the reciprocal tie of all its members by the solemn engagement of the *vow*, and the formation of collective property by the sacrifice of all that was individual. The renunciation of personal will naturally led to that of individual property. Everything in the monastery was to be in common; the fortune like the labour, and interests like duties. The rule, therefore, denounced the idea of personal property as a vice which it was most essential to root out of the community. It was necessary, then, in becoming a monk, that a man should solemnly and for ever relinquish all his possessions, either to his own family, or to the poor, or to the monastery itself; reserving nothing to himself, possessing nothing of his own, absolutely nothing, not even tablets or a pen for writing, but receiving everything from the abbot, and that only for present use.[2]

An institution in which celibacy was implicitly the fundamental basis, alone could bear a discipline so contrary to human nature. But even where a man, by giving up marriage, made himself free of all cares for his livelihood, he might still remain, in his own person, the object of the enfeebling tenderness of parents and friends. Benedict knew too well the habits of the nobility, to which he himself and his principal disciples belonged, not to redouble his precautions against the attempts made by parents to form a certain reserve or individual patrimony for the advantage of the child whom they gave to God by placing him in a monas-

[1] *Reg.*, c. 55.

[2] "Præcipue hoc vitium amputetur de monasterio: neque codicem, neque tabulas, neque graphium, sed nihil omnino."—*Ibid.*, c. 33. Compare c. 58.

tery. By a special chapter of the rule, made out with the legal precision of a contemporary of Tribonius, every nobleman who destined his son for monastic life was required to swear that his child should receive nothing whatever of the paternal fortune, neither directly nor through a third party. The parents could only bestow on the monastery itself a donation which represented the fortune of their child, reserving the interest during their life if it so pleased them.[1]

Even in the forms established by the new code to regulate the admission, try the vocation, and bind the consciences of these men who came to sacrifice their will and patrimony to God, everything shows the genius of organisation possessed by Benedict. There were two classes of candidates for monastic life. First, the children confided in their youth by their parents to the monastery, or received by the charity of the monks; the rule prescribes their education with minute solicitude: then the young men and mature men who came out of the world to knock at the door of the cloister. Far from encouraging them, Benedict ordains that they should be left there for four or five days without opening to them, in order to try their perseverance. If they persevered, they were introduced into the apartments provided for guests, and from thence, at the end of some days, into the *novitiate*. Here the novice was intrusted to an old monk, skilful in the art of gaining souls, who was charged to study closely his vocation and character, and to tell him the difficulties, the humiliations, and discomforts, which he would meet in the hard path of obedience. If after two months he promised to persevere, the entire rule was read to him, and the reading concluded in these words: "Behold the law under which thou wouldst

[1] "Promittant sub jurejurando quia nunquam per se, nunquam per suffectam personam, nec quolibet modo ei aliquando aliquid dent aut tribuant occasionem habendi. . . . Reservato sibi, si voluerint, usufructuario. Atque ita omnia obstruantur, ut nulla suspicio permaneat puero, per quam deceptus perire possit . . . quod experimento didicimus."—*Reg.*, c. 59.

fight: if thou canst observe it, enter; if thou canst not, depart in freedom!"[1] Three times during the year of novitiate this trial was renewed. When the year had expired, if the novice persevered, he was warned that shortly he should no longer have the power of leaving the monastery, and of laying aside the rule which he had only accepted after such mature deliberation. It was intimated to him that he was about to lose the power of disposing of himself.[2] Introduced into the oratory in presence of all the community, he there, before God and His saints, promised *stability* or perpetual residence, and also reformation of his morals and obedience, under pain of eternal damnation. He made a declaration of this, written with his own hand, and placed it upon the altar, then threw himself at the feet of each of the brethren, begging them to pray for him. From that day he was considered a member of the community.

Almost all the ancient monks had adopted a sort of novitiate, and various vows, more or less formal. But no regular form had ever been adopted before this wise and imposing solemnity. Profession had even been often regarded as acknowledged by the sole fact of taking the monastic dress, and there were instances of this even after St. Benedict.[3] But the *vow of stability* imposed by the new

[1] "Si perseveraverit pulsans, et illatas sibi injurias . . . patienter portare. . . . Senior ei talis deputatur, qui aptus sit ad lucrandas animas . . . omnino curiose intendat. . . . Prædicentur ei omnia dura et aspera. . . . Ecce lex sub qua militare vis: si potes observare, ingredere; si vero non potes, liber discede."—*Reg.*, c. 58. Chapters 60 and 61 indicate the precautions to be taken for the reception of priests or monks who present themselves to be received, having left their former monastery. The *Rule* forbids them to be received without the consent of the abbot of the monastery which they have left.

[2] "Ex illo die nec proprii corporis potestatem se habiturum sciat."—*Reg.*, c. 58.

[3] This was called *professio tacita*. We shall hereafter see it exemplified in the case of Frideburg, the betrothed of King Sigebert, in the life of St. Gaul: of King Wamba in Spain, and of the English nuns, quoted by St. Anselm, lib. iii. epist. 157.

legislator, which no former rule had prescribed, was a happy and productive innovation, and became one of the principal guarantees of the duration and strength of cenobitical life.[1] Besides, no material or legal constraint at that time held the monk to his vow; even his secular dress was preserved with care, to be restored to him if he unfortunately desired to leave the monastery.

Now that we perceive the general spirit and foundation of the rule of St. Benedict, we may be permitted to pass rapidly over the details. The seventy-three chapters of which it is composed are divided as follows:—Nine touch upon the general duties of the abbot and the monks; thirteen upon worship and the divine services; twenty-nine upon discipline, faults, and penalties; ten upon the internal administration of the monastery; twelve upon various subjects, such as the reception of guests, the conduct of the brethren while travelling, &c.

Thirteen hundred years have passed since the hand of Benedict traced all those minute regulations, and nothing has been found more fit to strengthen the religious spirit and monastic life. The most admired and effectual reforms have scarcely had any other aim than to lead back the regular clergy to a code of which time has only confirmed the wisdom and increased the authority.

Among all these details of the rule, the scrupulous care which the legislator has taken to bind the Religious to the careful celebration of divine worship, according to the litur-

[1] Some will be astonished, perhaps, not to see in the rule of St. Benedict, the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which they consider as the essence of monastic life; but if the latter alone is mentioned, it is because the two others were implied in the very condition of monk by all the previous canons of the Church relative to the monastic institution. Now, St. Benedict only laid claim to *regulate* that institution, not to create it. They were bound to continence and poverty—that is to say, to possess nothing in their own right, by the mere fact of becoming monks, as they were restricted from marrying—by the mere fact of being ordained subdeacons, without taking on this subject any verbal engagement.

gical usage of the Roman Church, is specially remarkable. They were to give themselves to prayer, chanted aloud by the community, first in the night, at vigils, which began about two in the morning and continued until dawn; then six times during the day—at prime, tierce, sexte, nones, vespers, and compline. The hundred and fifty psalms of David were divided among these seven services in such a manner that the whole psalter should be chanted every week; and this prayer in common was not to interrupt mental devotion, which, during the remaining time, was to be short and simple.[1]

Then come these noble rules of sobriety, which, as Bossuet says, take everything superfluous from nature, and spare her all anxiety in respect to that which is necessary, and which are but a reproduction of the customs of the first Christians. To serve each other by turns in cooking and at the table; to eat, in silence, listening to the reading of some pious book, of two cooked dishes and one uncooked, with a pound of bread and a *hemine* of wine,[2] whether they made two meals in the day or only one; to abstain from all flesh of quadrupeds; and to increase the number and severity of the fasts appointed by the Church.[3] To have for clothing only a tunic, with a *cowl* for the choir, and a *scapulary* for work:[4] this was nothing else than the hooded frock of the

[1] *Reg.*, c. 8, 19, 20.

[2] *Ibid.*, c. 39. The dessert was not included in these two dishes, or *pulmentaria cocta*. "Si fuerint poma aut nascentia leguminum, addatur et tertium." It is probable that the pound of bread prescribed by the rule was much more considerable than the modern pound, since it was ordered that they should reserve a third of it for supper. It has long been disputed what was the exact amount of the *hemine* of wine. The most general opinion is that it was equivalent to a setier, or a little more than a pint.—D. CALMET, t. ii. pp. 68–73.

[3] They were to fast every day from the middle of September till the beginning of Lent, and during Lent only to eat after vespers.—*Reg.*, c. 41.

[4] *Ibid.*, c. 55. The tunic is a robe with long sleeves, without a hood, which was used as a shirt; it was first white, and was subsequently changed into black, when the monks had shirts of wool or of coarse cloth. The cowl, *cuculla*, became a large mantle with a cowl, which they put on

ploughmen and shepherds, borrowed from that of the slaves of pagan times, such as Columella has described.[1] To sleep in one general dormitory; to sleep but little, and always in their clothes and shoes;[2] and finally, to keep an almost continual silence during the whole day.[3] Such were the minute and salutary regulations which authorised Benedict to declare that the life of a monk ought to be a perpetual Lent.[4]

And there were other rules still better adapted to root out from the hearts of the Religious even the last allurements of pride, voluptuousness, and avarice. They could not receive either letter or present,[5] even from their nearest relatives, without the permission of the abbot. In accepting the rule, they pledged themselves beforehand to bear patiently public and humiliating penances for the smallest faults, and even corporeal punishment,[6] in case of murmuring or repetition of the offence, and this while still subject to temporary excommunication and final exclusion. But mercy appeared by the side of severity: the excluded brother who desired to return, promising amendment, was

for the offices of the choir; large sleeves were subsequently added to it: this is black among all the Benedictines. It was also called frock, *floccus*, especially in the order of Cluny. The scapulary consists of two pieces of cloth joined round the neck, with a hood, and which hangs one part in front and the other behind: the length varies; it extends even below the tunic for the leaders of the choir, and to the knees only of the converts. The rule allowed to the monks for covering for the feet *caligæ et pedules*, by which were generally meant hose, or stockings and shoes. *Femoralia* were only allowed when they travelled on horseback. "Qui in via diriguntur de vestiario accipiant femoralia, quæ revertentes lota ibi restituant." Lastly, a narrow girdle of leather completed the costume of the monk.

[1] *De Re Rustica*, lib. i. c. 8, p. 445, ed. Gesner, 1772.

[2] *Reg.*, c. 22. The custom in ancient times, which was continued even in the middle ages, was, as we know, to sleep without clothing.

[3] *Ibid.*, c. 42.

[4] *Ibid.*, c. 49.

[5] "Quælibet munuscula."—*Ibid.*, c. 54.

[6] *Ibid.*, c. 23 and 28.—"Si etiam excommunicatus non emendaverit, acrior ei accedat correctio, id est, ut verberum vindicta in eum procedat." See also for other penances, c. 43–46.

to be received anew, and three times in succession, before he was banished for ever from the community.

However, in going back to the austerity of the ancient Fathers of the desert, Benedict does not hesitate to say, in the preamble of his rule, as has been seen, that he believed he had ordained nothing too hard or too difficult to be followed; and he ends by declaring that it was only a *little beginning*, a modest introduction to Christian perfection.[1]

Such are the most remarkable features of this famous code, which has ruled so many souls for so many ages, and which, although it has lost almost all its subjects, remains, notwithstanding, one of the most imposing monuments of Christian genius. Compared to the previous Oriental rules, it bears that seal of Roman wisdom, and that adaptation to Western customs, which has made it, according to the idea of Gregory the Great, a masterpiece of clearness and discretion,[2] in which judges who are above all suspicion have not hesitated to recognise a character of good sense and gentleness, humanity and moderation, superior to everything that could be found up to that time in either Roman or Barbarian laws, or in the habits of civil society.[3]

No kind of praise has been wanting to this code of monastic life. St. Gregory, St. Thomas, St. Hildegard, and St. Antoninus, believed it to be directly inspired by the Holy Spirit. Popes and Christian princes have vied with each other in celebrating it. The prince of Catholic eloquence has described it in these incomparable lines:—

"This *rule* is an epitome of Christianity, a learned and mysterious abridgment of all the doctrines of the gospel, all the institutions of the holy Fathers, and all the counsels of perfection. Here prudence and simplicity, humility and

[1] "In qua institutione nihil asperum, nihilque grave nos constituturos speramus."—*Prologus Regulæ.* "Initium conversationis . . . hanc minimam inchoationis regulam."—*Reg.*, c. 73.

[2] "Discretione præcipuam, sermone luculentam."—*Dial.*, ii. 36.

[3] GUIZOT, *l. c.* Compare DOM PITRA, *l. c.*

courage, severity and gentleness, freedom and dependence, eminently appear. Here, correction has all its firmness; condescension all its charm; command all its vigour, and subjection all its repose; silence its gravity, and words their grace; strength its exercise, and weakness its support; and yet always, my Fathers, he calls it *a beginning*, to keep you always in holy fear." [1]

But there is something which speaks with a still greater eloquence than that of Bossuet in honour of the Benedictine rule; it is the list of saints which it has produced; it is the tale of conquests which it has won and consolidated throughout the West, where for eight centuries it reigned alone; the irresistible attraction which it had for bright and generous minds, for upright and devoted hearts, for souls enamoured of solitude and sacrifice; the beneficent influence which it exercised upon the life of the secular clergy, warming them, by its rays, to such a point that, purified and strengthened, they seemed for a time to identify themselves with the children of Benedict. It is distinguished above all by the contrast between the exuberant life and faith and spirituality in the countries where it reigned, and the utter debasement into which the Oriental Church, dishonoured by the marriage of its priests even before it became a prey to schism and Islamism, had fallen.

St. Gregory relates that the man of God whose life he writes, having one night anticipated the hour of matins, and gazing upon heaven from the window of his cell, saw all at once the darkness dispelled by a light more dazzling than that of day; and, amid that ocean of light, the entire world appeared to him crowded into a ray of the sun, "so paltry does the creature appear," adds the pontiff, "to the soul which contemplates the Creator!" [2] Tradition has

[1] BOSSUET, *Panégyrique de Saint Benoît.*

[2] "Omnis etiam mundus, velut sub uno solis radio collectus, ante oculos ejus adductus est. . . . Quia animæ videnti Creatorem angusta est omnis creatura."—*Dial.*, ii. 34. The inscription in the tower of Monte Cassino,

interpreted that sight as a vision of the splendid future awaiting the order which Benedict was about to form, and which was to embrace the Christian universe, and fill it with light. A lively and faithful image, in fact, of the destiny of an institution, the future course of which, perhaps, its founder only foresaw under that mysterious form!

The admiration of Catholic doctors has signalised in Benedict the Moses of a new people, the Joshua of another promised land.[1] Nothing that he has said or written permits us to believe that he had any such idea of himself. Historians have vied in praising his genius and clear-sightedness; they have supposed that he intended to regenerate Europe, to stop the dissolution of society, to prepare the reconstitution of political order, to re-establish public education, and to preserve literature and the arts. I know not whether he entertained such grand plans, but I can see no trace of them either in his rule or his life. If ever they penetrated into his soul, it was only to be eclipsed and replaced by a still higher and greater idea, by thought of salvation. I firmly believe that he never dreamt of regenerating anything but his own soul and those of his brethren the monks. All the rest has been given him over and above "the one thing needful." What is most to be admired in his social and historical influence is, that he seems never to have dreamt of it. But is it not a sign of true greatness to achieve great things without any pompous commotion, without preconceived ideas, without premeditation, under the sole empire of a modest and pure design, which God exalts and multiplies a hundredfold? Strange to say, nothing even in his rule itself indicates that it was written with the idea of governing

inhabited by St. Benedict, says, "Universum mundum divini solis radio detectum inspexit semel et despexit." St. Bonaventura explains this vision thus: "Mundus non fuit coangustatus in uno radio solis, sed ejus animus dilatatus, quia vidit omnia in illo cujus magnitudine omnis creatura angusta est."—*De Luminaribus*, serm. 20.

[1] S. Odo; S. Thomas, *Serm. de S. Bened.*

other monasteries besides his own. He might have supposed that it would be adopted by communities in the neighbourhood of those which he had collected round him; but nothing betrays any intention of establishing a common link of subordination between them, or of forming a bond between different religious houses, in order to originate an association of different and co-ordinate elements, like the great orders which have since arisen.[1] The object of his rule, on the contrary, seems to have been the concentration in a single home of the greatness and strength of the monastic spirit. Everything is adapted to that single monastic family, which, by a wonderful arrangement of Providence, has been constituted the stem of such productive and innumerable branches. Like Romulus, who, tracing the primitive walls of Rome, never dreamt of that King-People, that greatest of nations, to which he was giving birth, Benedict did not foresee the gigantic work which was destined to issue from the grotto of Subiaco and the hillside of Monte Cassino. The masters of spiritual life have always remarked, that the man who begins a work blessed of God does it unawares. God loves to build upon nothing.

And what is truly serviceable to man is to see the greatness of God issuing out of his own nothingness, and to recognise in that spectacle the productive power given to himself, when he triumphs over fallen nature, so as to become again the lieutenant and instrument of God.

However it might be, the results of Benedict's work were immense. In his lifetime, as after his death, the sons of the noblest races in Italy, and the best of the converted Barbarians, came in multitudes to Monte Cassino. They came out again, and descended from it to spread themselves over all the West; missionaries and husbandmen, who were soon to become the doctors and pontiffs, the artists and legislators, the historians and poets of the

[1] YEPES, *Coron. Gener.*; HÆFTEN, *Disquisit.*, lib. i. p. 12.

new world. They went forth to spread peace and faith, light and life, freedom and charity, knowledge and art, the Word of God and the genius of man, the Holy Scriptures and the great works of classical literature, amid the despairing provinces of the destroyed empire, and even into the barbarous regions from which the destruction came forth. Less than a century after the death of Benedict, all that barbarism had won from civilisation was reconquered; and more still, his children took in hand to carry the Gospel beyond those limits which had confined the first disciples of Christ. After Italy, Gaul, and Spain had been retaken from the enemy, Great Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia were in turn invaded, conquered, and incorporated into Christendom.[1] The West was saved. A new empire was founded. A new world began.

Come now, O Barbarians! the Church no longer fears you. Reign where you will; civilisation shall escape your hands. Or rather it is you who shall defend the Church, and confirm civilisation. You have vanquished everything, conquered everything, overthrown everything; you shall now be in your turn vanquished, conquered, and transformed. Men are born who shall become your masters. They shall take your sons, and even the sons of your kings, to enrol them in their army. They shall take your daughters, your queens, your princesses, to fill their monasteries. They shall take your souls to inspire them; your imaginations to delight and purify them; your courage to temper it by sacrifice; your swords to consecrate them to the service of faith, weakness, and justice.

The work will be neither short nor easy; but they will accomplish it. They will govern the new nations by showing them the ideal of sanctity, of moral force, and greatness. They will make them the instruments of goodness and truth. Aided by these victors of Rome, they

[1] "Et quidem Europa fere tota, Benedicti sæculo, monachis adlaborantibus, veram religionem suscepit."—MABILLON, *Præf. in* I *sæcul.*, c. 2.

will carry the sway and laws of a new Rome beyond the furthest limits ever fixed by the Senate, or dreamt of by the Cæsars. They will conquer and bless lands which neither the Roman eagles nor even the apostles have reached. They will become the nursing fathers of all modern nations. They will be seen beside the thrones of Charlemagne, of Alfred, and of Otto the Great, forming with them Christian kingdoms and a new world. Finally, they will ascend the apostolic See with St. Gregory the Great and St. Gregory VII., from which they will preside, during ages of conflict and virtue, over the destinies of Catholic Europe and of the Church, gloriously assisted by races faithful, manful, and free.

END OF VOL. I.

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